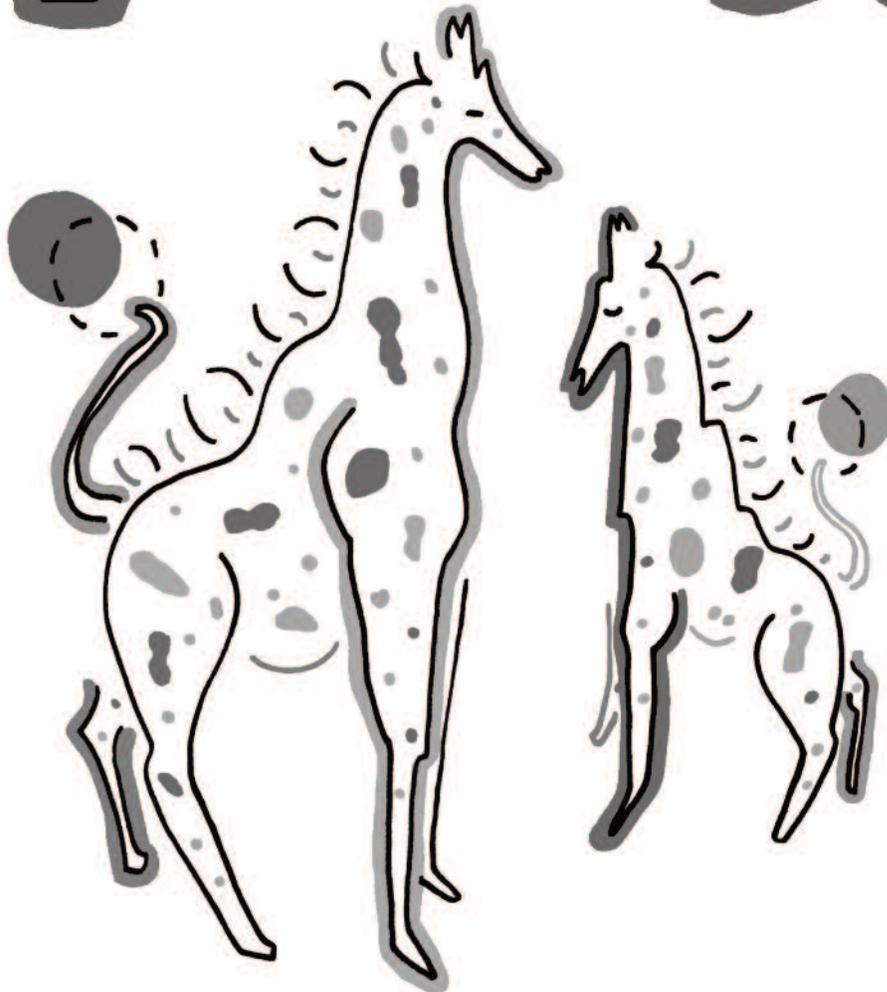
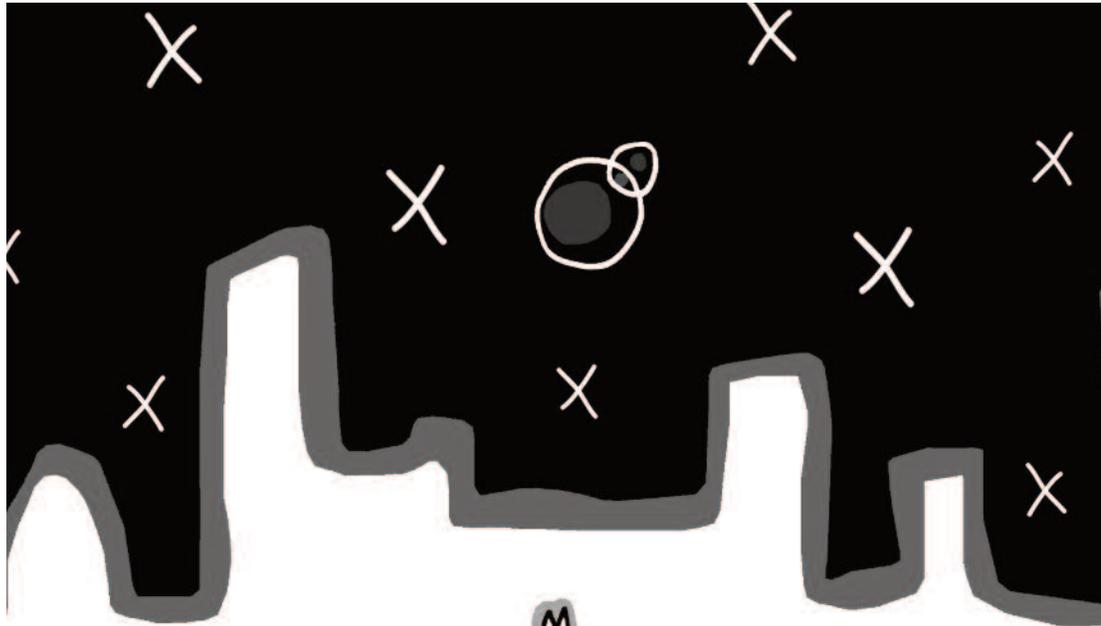


TRANSITION

FALL 2020



INSIDE

From our
Executive Director:
"What a difference a
virus can make"
Page 3

TRANSITION

WRITING THE LIFE

FICTION
Page 6

NON-FICTION
Page 8

POETRY
Page 14

WRITING FOR
YOUR LIFE
Page 25

Work from groups in
Eastend
Prince Albert
Regina
Saskatoon
Weyburn

Enjoy!

TRANSITION

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Phyllis O'Connor, Executive Director
Canadian Mental Health Association
(Saskatchewan Division) Inc.

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1. Send original and unpublished articles, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual art that represent current mental health issues and reflect on their impact on individuals.
2. Maximum manuscript lengths: prose – 10 ms pages; poetry – 10 poems or 5 ms pages, whichever is less; visual art – 5 pieces.
3. Unsolicited international contributions, reprints and simultaneous submissions (to several magazines) are not considered.
4. Turnaround time is normally within one issue or up to 6 months: do not send a second submission before the first has been reviewed.
5. Payment is \$50.00 per printed page (\$25/half page); \$40.00 per published visual art work; and \$200.00 for cover art. Cap on contributions: \$200/author.
6. Only electronic submissions including full contact information and a brief bio are accepted.
7. Submit manuscripts in MS Word format (12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, normal margins) as e-mail attachment to: contactus@cmhask.com; or directly to the Editor at tdyck@sasktel.net.
8. Surface mail should be sent to:

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**I'm not faking being sick. I'm
actually faking being well!**



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CONTENTS

- 2 TED DYCK
Editorial
A pandemic that is endemic in our world

CMHA SK Pages

- 3 PHYLLIS O'CONNOR
Executive Director's Report
What a difference a virus can make
- 4 Prevent echo pandemic of mental illness
- 4 Mental illness is not a crime

TRANSITION Pages

LIVING THE LIFE

- 5 Writing for mental health

WRITING THE LIFE - FICTION

- LIZ BETS
6 The painting inside my eyelids
- ALISON LOHANS
7 Channeling Bach

WRITING THE LIFE - NON FICTION

- ELLA SOFIA
8 Don't be afraid of the light
- NEIL GARVIE
10 Gender feelings
- LEIF GREGERSEN
11 A journey of challenges
- MARILYN SCHESKE
12 Steve
- JOHN SCHMITT
13 The Frenchman was the Whitemud

TRANSITION Pages

WRITING THE LIFE - POETRY

- TILLEN BRUCE
14 Poems from a play
- VICTOR ENNS
16 Ueber Allen Gipfeln ist Ruh"
16 The worst day of my life (so far)
- CAROL GARVIE
17 Postpartum
- gillian harding-russell
18 Third Eye on the ground
- MELANIE MCFARLANE
18 The First Memory
18 Going Steady
- LINDA MONOHAN
19 to say there is poetry
19 touch
19 just something to remember
20 the song
20 Christmas at the drop-in centre
- CHELSEI ROBICHAUD
21 Figurehead
21 I recognize your pain
- ROLLI
21 I felt so poorly so
21 Then descended
22 The condemned man
22 As the boring poets spoke
22 My very dreary friend
- JAMES SKELTON
22 White luminous cube
- DANICA SCHOFIELD
23 The girl in the mirror
- MELISSA YUANS-INNES
23 On the Edge of a Soul
23 Home

REVIEW

- TED DYCK
24 Eastend writer hangs out the wash

WRITING FOR YOUR LIFE (WFYL) Pages

- 25 Judge's Comments

EASTEND

- 26 GLENNA GORDON
- 26 CATLIN MCCULLAM-ARNAL

PRINCE ALBERT

- 26 SHERRY FAVREAU
- 26 AYAMI GREENWOOD
- 27 WENDEL GUIDO
- 27 HOLLY KNIFE

REGINA

- 27 JAYNE MELVILLE WHYTE

SASKATOON

- 28 STEPHEN DUNSTER
- 28 SAMANTHA HANSEN
- 28 BRIAN PRIEST
- 28 DEREK SARAZIN
- 29 JAMES SKELTON
- 29 JAMES SNYDER
- 29 BRENDA STRETCH

WEYBURN

- 30 KEVIN BELLEMARE-PROKOPETZ
- 30 DEBRA CARLSON
- 30 NINA SCHAD
- 30 LARRY LAUDER
- 31 JENNIFER MORIN
- 31 GARETTE STRONGARM
- 31 BARRY STYRE
- 31 ERIC VALENTINE
- 32 Notes on Contributors



EDITORIAL

A pandemic that is endemic in our world

TED DYCK

My father, as a young man living in Ukraine (then still a part of Russia), survived the Great Flu Pandemic of 1918; a year later, 1919, he escaped the Great Massacre of Eichenfeld, a small Mennonite village on the Dnieper.



TED DYCK
EDITOR

I have learned these things firsthand: one of my uncles in his later years wrote up the experience of living through the Great Flu in Russia (a copy of which I have in my files); and, as my father told me long ago, he lived with my Grandfather, a miller, on a small stream across from Eichenfeld, where he helped to bury the remains of the Mennonites slaughtered by a group of Cossacks led by the in/famous Nestor (“Bat’ko,” Father) Makhno in 1919.

I trust we will all survive the Covid19 Pandemic (though I am a dangerous 81).

And as far as I know, the Cossacks are not riding their meticulously groomed horses about Eastend where I live on the banks of the Frenchman / Whitemud (though the Oglala chief, Crazy Horse, is rumored to have camped on that river long ago).

As I write these words Canada is approaching approx. 235,000 cases of COVID19. As a percentage of our population (approx. 38,000,000), that’s about .61%, **1 out of every 165 people in Canada** have been infected with Covid19 so far this year. (Canada Public Health 2020 31 October 2020).

In any given year, **1 in 5 people in Canada** will personally experience a mental health problem or illness. (CMHA 09 September 2020)

A fact: The rate, 1 in 5, of mental

illness in Canada is more than 33 times the rate, 1 in 165, of COVID19 infection in Canada.

A mental health pandemic is evidently endemic in our Canadian world – What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; [Is there] nothing ... new under the sun[?] (Eccl.1:9).

Everything under the sun has something to do with this issue of TRANSITION.

For one, CMHASK and WFYL have gone virtual, more or less. For another, the TRANSITION PAGES have

measured up to accommodate shrinkages in the other sections, allowing me to (nearly) sift through an ever-present backlog (for which backlog I thank the River Gods).

Finally, WFYL (write for your life) “wants” to morph into WFMH (write for mental health). Baby steps, so far: a new CMHASK branch wants to join the WFYL Groups; Eastend WFYL Group has conducted a series of WFMH workshops with Indigenous women in a local healing lodge; Correctional Service Canada seems interested.

Let all post-pandemic worlds begin.

THE WRITING
FOR MENTAL HEALTH
WORKSHOPS 2019 – 2020

THE EASTEND WRITERS



TED DYCK
MAREIKE NEUHAUS
CAITLIN MCCULLAM-ARNAL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

What a difference a virus can make!

PHYLLIS O'CONNOR

CMHA Saskatchewan Division started 2020 with a great deal of anticipation and excitement around the opening of our H.O.P.E. Learning Centre and the "We're Only Human – Promoting Workplace Wellness" conference. The H.O.P.E. Learning Centre was able to offer its first training, "The Art of Friendship," for individuals from around the province in the area of peer support. We were off to a great start.

And then came COVID-19.....

At the end of March everything came to a sudden stop. Branches and Division Office had to close their doors, effectively putting a halt to all of our programs and supports, but we were all concerned about the individuals we serve and wanted to ensure that they were not stranded. It took a few days for us to start to wrap our heads around what had just happened, but very quickly the CMHA team mobilized to come up with new ways to stay in touch with our clients and to provide education and support for our communities at a time when mental health was being challenged. I couldn't be more proud of how our team handled the crisis.

Right away CMHA National set up twice-weekly Zoom calls with the National Executive Team so we could all share concerns and ideas from across the country. In Saskatchewan, regular Zoom calls were set up with the Provincial Management Team so, once again, we could share concerns, information and resources around the province. I feel communication had never been stronger among our team members and there was a real spirit of support and collaboration.

Branches started developing new and innovative ways to keep in touch with our clients and provide supports. For some that involved assigning staff to make regular calls to make sure they were okay and to provide whatever supports we could. For others it meant preparing meals and providing them on a "take-out" model, once again providing an opportunity to maintain contact. Gradually as restrictions eased a bit some were able to start up walking groups or to invite small numbers back into the branch for some activities while still maintaining the necessary physical distancing and cleaning protocols to keep staff and clients safe. Some branches used the opportunity to offer their staff training on a wide variety of areas that would support their work when things returned to "normal."

Others utilized staff to do a deep clean of the branch facilities in preparation for reopening. I am very happy that, for the most part, we were able to keep our staff employed during the pandemic. While Division and the Branches may have been closed to the public, we were all available by phone, email, or social media throughout this time. Staff that were able to carry out their duties from home did so and finally by mid-June we were gradually able to bring staff back and reopen our Division Office and branches.

The H.O.P.E. Learning Centre worked hard to develop online training and one of the most successful formats has been our Mental Health Bites.

Every Tuesday at noon a free presentation is given by either a staff member of the Learning Centre or an invited guest speaker. During May to October we have covered a variety of topics and the number of participants is steadily increasing. We are planning to keep these on into 2021 and dates, times, and title of presentations can be seen on our website www.sk.cmha.ca.

CMHA Saskatchewan Division was also very concerned about how people in the community were dealing with the pandemic. We established the

Wellness Support Response Line with the generous support of the South Sask. Community Foundation and SaskTel. Donated cell phones were located at each of our branches throughout the province and staff were assigned to take calls. This was never meant to be a crisis response line but rather someone could call when they just needed to talk to someone about mental health and possibly be provided with resources or services to assist. Once again, I am extremely grateful to our staff who stepped up to man the phones and to David Nelson and Rebecca Rackow who developed and are administering this project. As of the end of October this project had provided support to about 750 people in our province.

2020 has certainly been a challenge and it's anyone's guess when this will be behind us. We are very grateful to our funders and donors who have understood the challenges we face and who are still there for us in this difficult time. CMHA Saskatchewan Division will continue to come up with innovative ways to meet the needs of our communities and in the long run, I feel this will make us a stronger organization.

Take care everyone.

The CMHA team is staying in touch with clients, and providing education and support for communities . . .



PHYLLIS O'CONNOR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Canadian Mental Health Association Saskatchewan Division Inc.

Prevent echo pandemic of mental illness

AN EXCERPT:

To avoid a potential echo pandemic of mental illness and mental health issues as a result of COVID-19, the Canadian Mental Health Association calls for immediate investment in the scale-up-of cost-effective, evidence-based community mental health programs and supports that can take the pressure off acute-care services across Canada.

“The hard truth is that our mental health system in Canada already lacked capacity to meet demand before this pandemic began. We must act now to ensure we are prepared for a surge in mental health problems as a result of COVID-19,” says Margaret Eaton, CMHA’s National CEO, who appeared as a witness before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health to advise on the mental health impacts of the pandemic.

CMHA recommends that Canada scale up mental health promotion programs and supports for those experiencing new pandemic-related stress and anxiety and to stave off new demands on the system coming from the increases in depression, psychological distress, substance use, PTSD and domestic violence that almost always accompany large-scale disasters.

“Intervening early, before people are in crisis, is not only the most compassionate and effective way to help get people back on their feet, it’s also the most cost-effective,” says Eaton.

For instance, CMHA’s BounceBack, a cognitive behavioural therapy based skill-building program already available in

B.C., Ontario and Manitoba costs about \$460 per person and reduces the burden on acute care, where the average price of psychiatric or psychological services is typically about \$1,100 per person.

Part of the reason we have long wait times in Canada is that, for example, those with mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression are waiting to see a psychiatrist to get help when they could be best served by other community health-care professionals, such as peer support workers, mental health and addictions counsellors, therapists, nurse practitioners or recovery coaches.

“CMHA is poised to mobilize quickly to help our front-line workers, youth, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable segments of the population to get through this crisis with immediate, evidence-based mental health support,” says Eaton. “We can help Canadians get through this together if we invest and act now.”

CMHA Saskatchewan Division joins CMHA National in calling for the scale-up-of cost-effective, evidence-based community supports. We are pleased to announce that in the very near future BounceBack will be available to Saskatchewan residents and we are currently working on introduction of a BounceBack for Youth component, in collaboration with CMHA Manitoba Division, to also be available to youth within our province. Watch our social media and website for further information as this rolls out.

Mental illness not a crime

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is deeply concerned by the recent deaths of individuals experiencing a mental health crisis across Canada stemming from interactions with the police. Each of these deaths is an unacceptable tragedy. We extend our condolences to the families, loved ones and communities mourning these deaths, and call on decision-makers to heed the urgent calls for truth, accountability and change.

These deaths are the most recent in what has been a terrible history of fatalities involving people in mental health crisis situations. Systemic racism, including anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, has gravely increased the risks associated with experiencing a mental health crisis.

These tragic deaths also have a history rooted in Canada’s long-standing inadequate investment in mental health. Care providers, service users and other advocates have long been united in calling attention to this. The absence of effective crisis care, and the default reliance on police officers in responding to a mental health or addictions related crisis, is the result of decades of systemic underfunding of mental health and substance use services across Canada.

Many persons with lived experience of mental illness or a mental health issue tell us they have experienced positive, life-saving care from well-trained and compassionate police officers in Canada. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Moreover, stigma and discrimination can keep those who have had a negative experience with police while in crisis from coming forward, or from being believed if they do lodge a complaint.

A properly funded mental health care system would not

only allow us to better respond to mental health crises, but allow for earlier intervention and treatment to help prevent mental health crises in the first place. Experiencing a mental health crisis is not a crime, and the response must be a health-care response, not a law-enforcement response. A successful model may involve peer support specialists or rapid-response teams of mental health professionals either working alongside, embedded within - or instead of - the police. Whatever the model, the primary concern of first responders to emergencies involving a mental health crisis must be de-escalation and well-being.

Branches, regions and divisions of the CMHA federation and our community partners across Canada have on-the-ground experience with improving emergency first response to mental health crises, as well as deep policy expertise on solutions appropriate to their region, province or territory. We urge governments to:

- reach out to the leading voices of mental health advocacy and care in their jurisdiction;
- fully incorporate the voices of people with lived experience of mental health issues and illnesses in their decision-making for change;
- invest in community-level mental health care solutions to mental health crises; and
- acknowledge the role of colonialism and racism, particularly anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, in our systemic failure to deal safely with mental health crises.

Health emergencies require a health care response. We must all commit to doing more.



Writing for mental health . . .

This article is excerpted from THE WRITING FOR MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS 2019-2020 (WorDoctor Press 2020) conducted by the Eastend Writers at Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge under the watchful eye of Kikawinaw Rachel Park and funded by CSC.

Writing makes you better.

In a nutshell, that's the *sine qua non* of the project that gave rise to this book. And it's an aphorism grounded in decades-long study and research by especially one psychologist and validated by the work of many others.

To start at the end, James Pennebaker's *The Secret Life of Pronouns* (2011) summarizes more than twenty-five years of some two hundred research studies that establish a simple fact: "[T]he mere act of translating emotional upheavals into words is consistently associated with improvements in physical and mental health" (5). The improvements included boosted immune functions, drops in blood pressure, reductions of depression, and elevations of mood. And the "[writing] act" was equally simple and profound: "write about traumatic experiences for 15-25 minutes a day for 3-4 days."

Of course Pennebaker's discoveries don't end there. Using computer analyses of thousands of writing samples, he discovered that improvements in the mental health of writers were associated with three types of changes in their writing about trauma: celebrating the positive without denying the negative; constructing, not just telling, a story to explain the trauma; and switching perspectives from which to view the trauma (9-12). This last change (in perspectives) is seen, e.g., in a writer's use of first-person singular pronouns as opposed to other pronouns (second-person, third-person, and plural) and leads to the title of his book.

As profound as these results are, writers have always known them intuitively (even when they refuse to admit them). Some of the evidence for such an outlandish claim is cited in the list of readings at the end of this essay. One of the earliest such is Robert Burton's life-long anatomy of his depression: "I write of melancholy by being busy to avoid melancholy." To suggest this pithy sentence summarizes his work would be a travesty – but it does express precisely the rationale of the WFMH Project.

Some four centuries later, Alicia Elliott summarizes a theme of her book in an equally succinct "... colonialism is like depression . . ." (11). With its title translating the Mohawk word for depression, *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground* lays out its author's experience of mental illness as an Aboriginal person writing her way through and out of it. Small wonder that this book was as close to a "text" for the Project as we would get. Together with its summative statement of theme, Elliott's memoir updates Burton's anatomy to

the 21st century context of a project undertaken by the Eastend Writers.

That half of the titles appended to this essay are by women is no mere coincidence: mental illness (and health) is no respecter of persons – old or young, rich or poor, male or female. In other words, the residents of OOHL are as likely as anyone to be fit practitioners of writing for therapy – but for one quibble – how can Aboriginal cultures be incorporated into this western procedure? It's not hard to set up workshops of writing for mental health: keep the groups small (5-10) to facilitate one-to-one engagements; provide a context of voluntary confidentiality, full respect, and empathetic critique; use freewriting techniques to enact Pennebaker's principles; keep the meetings more open than structured; and listen.

It turns out that the cultural relevance of our WFMH workshops was given to us. Each morning we were seated in a circle around a mixture of sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco burning in a central fire pit under the tall pillars of a symbolic teepee arching above us. The leader of the smudge brought the container of fragrant smoke to each of us, and we wafted it over and into ourselves. The leader closed the smudge with a prayer, immediately after which, a *speaking stone* (or object) was passed from person to person, giving each temporary *keeper* the privilege of briefly addressing the circle.

We were now ready to write for our mental health and our very lives.

A SHORT LIST OF READINGS, BRIEFLY and PERSONALLY ANNOTATED

Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). Perhaps the oldest writing in English on one of the best methods of coping with depression: write about it.

Dillon, Brian. *Essayism*. New York Review Books, 2017. A brilliant argument that the essay, because of its obsessive incompleteness, is the genre par excellence of the depressive writer.

Elliott, Alicia. *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*. Penguin, 2019. A collection of essays dealing with the author's depression as a First Nations person writing her way through it.

Macdonald, Helen. *H is for Hawk*. Penguin, 2014. The best, for itself and as a discovery that writing can heal. Bonus: seamlessly embeds a reading of T.H. White's *The Goshawk*.

Manning, Martha. *Undercurrents*. Revised ed. Harper-One, 1995. Another best, but now as an unadorned treatment of some sobering truths about clinical depression. Trust me.

Neuhaus, Mareike. *The Decolonizing Poetics of Indigenous Literatures*. Univ. Regina Press, 2015. Uses the holophrase to read Indigenous writing in the English language. PhD, Marburg.

Continued next page . . .



Canadian
Mental Health
Association
Saskatchewan
Division Inc.

The painting inside my eyelids

BY LIZ BETZ

Susan Sinclair's life is now in the city but her son Red who still farms the home place, is up for a visit, talking about the current set of troubles facing the farmers and ranchers. It's the same old song and dance and not what Susan wants to hear. Her son brings her word from the old neighbors, but when he mentions that Janet Finn asked about her, it is a surprise.

"You remember her, don't you Mom?"

Yes. The younger woman had distinguished herself by writing and publication in farm papers, local newspapers, once a First-Person Singular segment on CBC radio. Janet with her writing and Susan's painting made them fellow eccentrics. Being a swan in the chicken yard, as Susan's granny used to say.

"Is Janet still writing?"

Red shrugs. "Dunno. Never thought to ask."

A minute of disappointment threatens but Susan isn't going to spoil this visit with her son. She brings out his favorite cookies and pours him a cup of coffee. She can catch up with Janet herself, now that she's been reminded of their friendship.

At least Red hasn't brought the usual. Far too often people ask after her, only to express surprise that she's not painting anymore. She was forty before she picked up a brush and she's worked at that for twenty years. Did they expect her to go forever? She'll be seventy-five next month. Janet? Would be fifty something.

. . . continued from previous page

LIVING THE LIFE

. . . readings for mental health

Park, Jeff. *Writing at the Edge*. Peter Lang, 2005. Excellent introduction to writing for therapy by University of Saskatchewan professor and facilitator of Saskatoon WFYL Group.

Parley, Kay. *Inside the Mental*. Univ. Regina Press, 2016. Reveals the role of writing in author's recovery from mental illness while at Sask. Hospital (Weyburn). Good example of URP's work.

Pearson, Patricia. *A Brief History of Anxiety*. Random House, 2008. Memoir integrates author's personal experience of anxiety with its history. Utterly readable and informative.

Transition. Archives. < <https://sk.cmha.ca/documents/transition-magazine/>>. Traces the history of the Write For Your Life project. Includes writing by group members.

Pennebaker, James. *The Secret Life of Pronouns*. Bloomsbury, 2011. An engaging application of the psychological studies which established a scientific basis for writing as therapy.

Styron, William. *Darkness Visible*. Random House, 1990. A memoir of the author's descent into depression and his eventually successful struggle to learn how to cope with it.

Wallace, David Foster. "The Depressed Person." *Harper's Magazine*, January 1998, 57-64. Online. The truest insider description of the experience of depression known to me.

That night her pre-sleep thoughts have faces, strangers and family both, but before long she enters a dream from the farm. She comes in from work in the field then tries to sketch with the children's stubby left-over pencil crayons, but they break.

The next morning, Susan thinks of Janet again. Her features come to mind, square jawed, brown eyed, her hair short one year and long the next as, choosing one hairstyle would be boring.

How was it that they got to know each other? Likely the annual Art exhibit of Susan's. No. Susan saw Janet's by-line in one of the cattle magazines and called her with congratulations. At the time it seemed their loneliness was less for knowing each other, but their contact was sporadic. The calls dwindled more when Susan moved the city, got an agent for her artwork.

I hope she's still writing Susan thinks, as she dials Janet's number. Perhaps Janet wouldn't want to hear from such an old lady. But this isn't true. Janet is pleased and soon asks about Susan's world.

"I've got my dogs. I cook casseroles and deliver them for some of my shut-in neighbors."

"Do you make perogies?" Janet once wrote a humor article about the traditional dish and the women that made them. The women chuckle as they remember, together they might have poked a bit of fun at the standard farm-wife role but it never stopped them from acknowledging the neighbor women's talents.

"No. No more paintings either." Susan said. "And you? Are you still writing articles?"

"Some. Now I'm writing short stories with lame endings and wondering about biographies." Janet hesitates. "I won't quit but I'm drifting."

"You'll find something. In fact, I'd bet on it," Susan offers. The conversation ends on that note.

Just as a writer never really stops writing, there is something that Susan hasn't rid herself of. When she closes her eyes for sleep, she habitually pays attention to the images and forms that her mind produces. Sometimes the swirl is all colors, an unending palate of choices. That afternoon, as she settles into her nap, the images are textured like a printed page. Susan acknowledges the colors – lime green and pink tones from burgundy to blush, but her real mission becomes to read the words.

She wakes and enters a title in her painting journal, the first one since she'd packed away her supplies. It doesn't mean she's painting again. She closes the journal firmly, amused at this impulse to sketch anything.

Wide awake now, Susan finds the conversation with Janet echoing in her mind. Certain phrases, like perogy makers, conjure up the farm wife neighbors, still inside steamy kitchens, rolling out endless batches of dough to stretch, fill and pinch shut. Then Janet's list of writing projects. Historical biographies or short stories with lame endings.

Well, Susan realizes, Janet is at a crossroad. Every artist has them. Susan has scrapped projects, had times when she didn't know what to do next. But then something would loosen. Janet needs to know this. Yet Susan is reluctant to reach out and give her this reassurance. Is it laziness that she isn't keen on mentoring? Really, she feels instead like an old dog that isn't learning any tricks for the circus that is the world.



A circus where the clowns need to be fed. It's time to heat up the casserole, and deliver it on schedule for her shut in friend. She shakes off her thoughts.

That night, as if her journal has been empowered by the afternoon entry and has control over her, Susan awakes and opens it again. The painting inside her eyelids instantly recalled, she works quickly, pleased with the results. Then using almost angry motions, she makes a tiny figure on the crest of the hill with a huge X through it. As if to say there would be no riding off into the sunset for anyone. Susan marks the date - March 31, in the margin.

Exhausted, she places the journal on the floor beside her bed. Her last thought before sleep captures her is a question. Does this mean that she will be painting again? Tomorrow is April Fool's day, that detail puts a little grin on her face.

Her dreams provide no answer but instead bring her to her granny's grave. The dear woman is reaching for her and then she notices her parents are waiting too and her lover who is her husband come to stand beside her. A huge weight is on her chest, she cannot breathe. Her fright is eased when she sees the compassion on everyone's face but Susan cannot surrender yet. She has something she needs to do.

She fights; the covers flung aside, this sleep of dying delayed, as she grabs the journal. She scribbles 'Unlikely Heroines,' and makes the notation 'For Janet Finn'. Her final torch is passed because death waits no longer.

A few days later at Susan's funeral, her painting journal is presented to Janet. Dumfounded, Janet reads the journal's title -

Painting Inside My Eyelids. Janet has a glimmer of why Susan chose this title, but there is no good reason why the journal been handed to her.

"It's some of her sketches." Red says. "My sister and I want you to have this."

"This can't be for me." Janet protests, "I haven't talked to her for years before the other day."

"Mom wrote your name on her last entry."

Janet is quiet as a shiver goes up her back. It seems to be that the universe used Susan's hand to write her name. Susan would have understood this. To Janet's chagrin this brings tears to her eyes. She stammers her thanks. Then she places the journal down to give Susan's children a hug.

Before long, they excuse themselves; they need to talk to more of the crowd. Janet nods. She knows, how it is.

Janet is tempted to leaf through the journal but not here at the funeral luncheon. Quietly she sips her coffee. She feels that something has loosened and she will be creating once more. She closes her eyes for a moment and words seem to be funneling into a biography. She knows where she will find the artwork for the cover.

Janet's last sketch is a line of ascending angels entering the glow of a torch. The angels are female, and appear to be taken that very moment away from humble domestic and farming chores. One holds a rolling pin, another a vaccination syringe of the nature that would be used for cattle. The first angel is holding a painter's palette, and the final one is seated in front of a typewriter. Unlikely Heroines.

Channeling Bach

BY ALISON LOHANS

Alone at the keyboard, her fingers roam the expanse of cool black and white ivory. Bach's sixth *English Suite* lies open on the music rack, but knowing the tangle of sixteenth notes that await on the fifth page of the Allegro, she drifts instead in a dreamy rendition of an old Beatles tune. Chilled air suddenly licks the back of her neck. Ducking into the warmth of her collar, she shoulder-checks to the front door - still closed, deadbolt in its usual horizontal locked position. Everything exactly as she left it. Fingers still moving, though less fluently now, she shrugs and plays a satisfying broken chord in A minor.

Gooseflesh peppers her bare arms as the inexplicable chill intensifies. How on earth...? She knows the windows are closed; she's heard no extraneous sounds. The reassuring muted roar of the furnace calms her.

Her cellphone shrills. The piano strings resonate in tune. She reaches for the phone, in its usual spot beside the music. "Hello?"

"*Klavierübung mit Veränderungen!*" barks an unfamiliar voice. "*Jetzt ist die Zeit für Praktizierung!*"

She stares at the concise display of icons, each in its normal passive state. Nothing to indicate an active call. "M-may I ask who...?" It's no use; her mouth is too dry to speak,

and nobody replies. She clears her throat, swallows, stands up. On the nearby music shelf, the Bach statuette regards her with its stern but kindly gaze.

Pressing trembling hands against the frigid skin of her arms, she tries to rub away the shivers. Quite likely it's stress; she's had far too little sleep for months, and the approaching music exam occupies most of her waking thoughts - seldom a chance to relax, and now one of those blissful moments is shattered. She must be imagining all of this, so overtired...

The phone shrills again, urgency pulsing in its electronic sound. She waits through several more rings before sucking in a breath and putting the phone to her ear.

"*Veränderungen!*" the voice commands.

Waiting beside the *English Suites*, Bach's Goldberg Variations catch her eye. The printed exam entry form, not yet submitted, is tucked behind the Goldberg. Two yellow pencils lie at the base of the music rack. Reaching for one, she erases the *English Suite* listed on the application and scribbles in a replacement - hastily, for now music surges through her, demanding expression.

On the shelf, kindly Bach slowly lowers one eyelid in an unmistakable wink. Her fingers once again caress the black and white ivories. Now playing the sweet aria of his *Goldberg Variations*.

Don't be afraid of the light

BY ELLA SÖFIA

Do you have any fears?
Are you scared of anything so much that it makes you want to run as fast as you can in the other direction?

Maybe, for you, that fear is spiders. Or maybe it's public speaking, or blood, or heights. And maybe those fears are reasonable because you associate them with something terrible.

So then I have to ask, what if your biggest fear was life itself?

A Craving for the Dark

For as long as I can remember, I've said my prayers before bed. "Dear God, please bless everyone in the world with a long, happy, healthy, and beautiful life," I'd say, because that's what I wanted for the people of the world. Like many young people, I hoped for happiness, smiles, and peace for absolutely everyone.

But *unlike* many young people, I also hoped for an end. So, for as long as I can remember, each night after praying for nothing but the best for the world, I concluded with, "... and dear God, please bless me with cancer or some kind of illness so I can just die."

Selfish, I know. But I was scared.

I was scared of each day of my life because I assumed each would go badly.

I was frightened of each waking moment because I presumed it would be filled with pain. Why was that? I had no idea. I had lots of friends, a loving family, I did well in school and in athletics. My world seemed to be full of light, yet the pain in my heart and the darkness in my soul seemed to grow. I spent my childhood struggling to find a will to live. And every time I thought things were improving, the darkness crept back in.

By the time I reached eighth grade I got used to being sad all the time. Sadness oddly felt good, and since being sad was so easy and felt so awesome, I embraced it. I embraced the darkness and as a result my mind went even darker with each passing day.

When I began high school, I decided to start planning – instead of just praying for – an end to my mental suffering. That way, the world could go on a whole lot better without me and I would no longer have to be scared of the world. But then my plans were halted due to an unexpected event

My Prayers were nearly answered ...

Not even one month after I started planning my end, on January 10, 2008 just three months after my 14th birthday, I had a real life-threatening emergency. An arteriovenous malformation (or AVM for short) ruptured in my cerebellum and caused a hemorrhagic stroke. This called for emergency brain surgery and the doctors did not think I was going to make the night. Long story short, I *did* make the night and woke up a few days later ready to rehabilitate as if my major brain injury was just a small cut on my knee.

Fast forward nine years and it *seemed* like I made a full recovery from my brain injury. I had endured and graduated both high school and university. From the outside looking in, I seemed like a normal young adult; some might say this life-threatening event allowed me to love the light of life. But when I personally reflected on who I became after my brain injury, things did not seem normal, nor did a love for the light exist. I constantly noticed small deficits in my cognition caused by my brain injury, and after nine years those small deficits turned into huge burdens. Those burdens which I began to carry, combined with my negative and dark thoughts led me to hit my rock-bottom all over again.

A Blessing in Disguise

"Why was I still living?" I asked myself. For as long as I can remember, all I ever asked for was to die, and there I was at age 23... still living. The way I saw it, I had two options left in life: end it all or make it all better.

Let's look at option 1 (end it all). Well back in 2008, my life nearly ended, and it turns out, my friends and family weren't happy with that. So if I chose that route now, it would make them unhappy a second time around. Now let's look at option 2 (make it all better). Hmm... that would certainly make me happy. And if I was happy, then the people around me would be happy too. And hey, if they were happy, they'd probably make the people around *them* happy as well. And it's very likely that that ripple effect pattern would continue. So, then my options started to morph into: option 1 (make no one happy) and option 2 (fill myself and the world with happiness).

The answer got clearer.

If I could figure out how to transition from rock-bottom moment to breakthrough, I could make my world and the world of many others, better. And once I figured out the recipe for that rock-bottom to breakthrough transition (let's call it the R2B Transition), I could share it with the world.

Be Brave in the Face of Darkness

It turns out there are three steps to the R2B Transition, but if we're going to get specific here (which we obviously are) there are two pre-steps, three main steps, and one post-step. That said, the R2B Transition is a six-step process.

Pre-step One: belief. Without believing you can give yourself a good life and without believing you can make your existence meaningful, you'll never be able to take the remaining steps in the R2B Transition. Having a belief is going to give you enough confidence to at least start *trying* to give yourself a good life (even if you don't know how to do that yet).

That brings me to pre-step 2: recognition. You have to recognize that life won't always be good, but you'll *always* be able to derive meaning from life experiences. It's not exactly true that life gets better, but it is true that you get a Hell of a lot better at dealing with it. Recognize that you are going to experience tough times and get hurt feelings for the rest of your life. But, if you move through the remainder of the R2B Transition, you will learn to be resilient to tough times.

Main Step 1: Self-Care. This step is all about learning to

calm your anxiety, mitigate your stress, and balance your egies. Self-care tools include yoga, meditation, mindfulness, engaging in activities like colouring or painting, taking a bath, reading, or anything else that helps you chill-out and relax. The more self-care tools you add to your toolbelt, the easier it will be for you to relax in the midst of stressful situations.

Main Step 2: Self-Development. Now that you're relaxed and taking care of your body and soul, you're ready to push a little harder. Learning new tools to improve your skills and gain new skills will allow you to step-out of your comfort zone and seriously start developing yourself.

Step 3: Self-Discipline. Now that you're even stronger, it's time to start doing things simply because *you know you should*. For example, you choose to not eat ice cream because *you know you should* be eating healthy. Or, you choose to workout because you know you should be keeping a healthy level of physical fitness. When you do things that are hard simply because you know you should do them, you are building mental fortitude. But just like everything else in your life, the three steps in the R2B Transition require balance. So, in order to prevent burn-out while in the Self-Discipline step, you have to engage in Self-Care. And in order to keep yourself productive and not become lazy in the Self-Care step, you need to engage in Self-Development. And in order to improve a particular skill instead of becoming a jack of all trades in the Self-Development step, you need to engage in Self-Discipline. You can see those three main steps act as a loop; and I've coined that loop *the personal growth loop*. I believe that moving through that loop within the R2B Transition is necessary for living a healthy, balanced, and optimized life. And once you've gone through that loop at least once, you're ready to complete the entire R2B Transition...

Post-Step 1: Teach. Teach what you've learned to others; help others grow just as you have. As you teach, love for life and light spreads like a ripple effect.

After you transition, you'll end up realizing that your life got better because you *made* it better; you created your own light in the world, and you'll eventually start to crave it.

A New Craving for the Light

I made the transition. I created my own light.

Now, each morning I decide to put an exorbitant amount of work into being brave enough to face the light; and even braver to improve it.

I also realize that being fearless is not the same thing as being brave. There's still a fear of life – a small one that lingers in my mind. A fear that something will go wrong, a fear that a friend might hurt me, a fear that a family member might die, a fear that I'll lose my job, etc.. But now I know how to be brave – I know the self-care tools necessary to prevent burn-out and feelings of loneliness, I know the challenging self-development tools necessary to make incremental improvements, and I know that self-discipline is necessary because personal growth means embracing change.

The truth is, I still have suicidal thoughts. They occur *much* less frequently, but they do still occur. In fact, I might

have those thoughts occur for the rest of my life and hey, you might have them too. The difference is that I *now* know how to be resilient to those thoughts so that I can get them out of my head quicker than they entered. You see, life doesn't get better because bad things stop happening; it gets better because you get better at dealing with bad things.

Here's little a secret I learned about living life: your rock-bottom moment is actually meant to lead you to your breakthrough. You were built to endure tough times and put in the hard work to make your own transition; and when you do make that transition from rock-bottom to breakthrough, everything in between becomes meaningful.

I still say my prayers every night before bed. "Dear God, please bless everyone around the world with a long, happy, healthy, and beautiful life. And most importantly, please bless them with the belief that they can create meaning in their lives." After 23 years living, I didn't think I could create meaning in my life, until I finally did it. And now that I know I can, I promise from the absolute bottom of my heart, you can create it too. Believe in yourself, follow the R2B Transition, and don't be afraid of the light.



The Bowler by Henry Peters

Gender feelings

BY NEIL GARVIE

I've been checking my height since the other boys started stretching out. Mother used to buy my pants too large, always cutting them down, like I was never quite normal. About the same time the girls began openly ogling and sharing out loud how attractive the tall boys were. For girls — what a turn on, like I wasn't there in the room. Being short and invisible was hard to take. So I tried heightening. I added inner soles. I bought elevator shoes. When it was fashionable, I wore clogs — but I kept falling out of them and spraining my ankles.

When that didn't work, I turned clown — a laugh a minute. Loud and funny. But when that wore thin, I began fasting. If I was going to be short at least I'd be skinny.

Throughout my adult life I missed breakfast, working through lunch. My only meal a day was a lean, thin supper. Once I fasted for two and a half weeks on nothing but water, scotch, and cigarettes. A woman told me I never looked better. That made me feel good, so I began eating again.

I noticed my hair thinning sometime in my twenties. Yep, it was a girl who rubbed the top of my head, pointing it out. Why do some females feel it's a good idea to state the obvious? When she saw how disappointed I was she tried to make me feel better by saying bald guys are sexy. But the damage was done. Besides, the other girls still ogled and shared how luxurious a man's hair was. How could I miss that?

Being reminded, "Hey, shortie," by the other boys was an everyday thing. I fell into fighting to teach them some manners.

My mother-in-law (who didn't seem to like me) predicted that I'd turn out as a short, fat, bald man. Everything that was unsightly, unattractive, unappealing.

At first my first wife who was also short didn't seem to suffer from the same issues. She never complained about my stature. But she must've listened to her mother. Somehow my ex got the picture, shopping around, found someone taller, thinner with a full head of hair. At the time I didn't know married people traded up.

You might say I was hyper-sensitive, hung-up, fixated. Yet, for whatever reason women kept sharing about wanting men who were unlike me. So I gave up, withdrawing from a world of tall, thin, and coiffed.

Trouble is, I felt trapped in isolation. So one night I attended a meeting about such matters. The sign said Body Issues. It was hard not to notice the room was full of women. We listened to the guest speaker (who it turned out to be one of those girls who used to tease me about being short, fat, and balding). She spoke about how unfair her world was — being a woman and being so hung up about her weight, her figure, and trying to impress men.

She invited others to share. I figured that meant me. So I stood up and began to explain how we all have issues. I bumbled-about, fishing for words, but no one there had ever heard of male anorexia, especially from someone so chunky. Maybe if I was a bone rack? But I felt unsympathetic eyes burn into the back of my head. How dare I compare my pain to theirs?

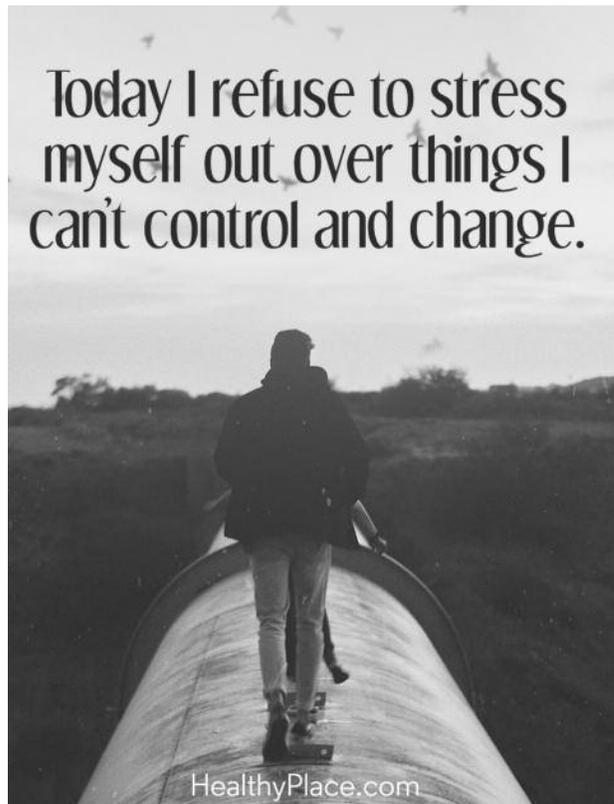
My pathetic monologue got a tongue lashing from the

main speaker. She scolded me while pointing her finger. "Don't you know that women have real body issues? You men are all the same. It's you who keep forcing us women to look alike, with big boobs and blonde hair, botoxed lips and tightened wrinkles. Say," she added, "don't I know you from somewhere?" I shook my head, then slipped out the back door from that meeting. I wonder if they missed me.

From that experience I got two clear but conflicting messages: on the one hand, new age men are encouraged to show their sensitive sides; on the other, nobody really wants to hear complaints from a frail, needy male.

I know you'd like me to conclude that I've grown past this. That I'm grateful all my parts are working. Better still, I'm 100% happy with myself. Or that I've stopped caring. That I have no body issues. But it just isn't true. Put me on an island, I'd still be caring...too much. Brain tattoos remain forever.

So how to cope? I turned back to the way it's always been — recollecting, denial's the answer. Something we males have always been adept at — hiding, lying about our feelings. If we haven't got it, fake it. It's held us in good stead through the ages — denying handicaps, denying disadvantages. No sensitive sharing, just shutting up and bearing our humiliations alone. So, I deny fasting or heightening or adding shoe polish to thicken my hair, or, for that matter, having any body issues. Most of all, if you should read this essay — someone's pulled it out of the waste basket with my name by the title claiming I wrote it, I'd only deny it.





A journey of challenges

BY LEIF GREGERSEN

Getting older changed the game. As a teen it seemed the way to attain hero status was to drink the most beer, pick up the best-looking girl, or make the most money. Then, one day as I was near to finishing high school, with high hopes of University ahead of me, something happened that was to change my life forever.

I had heard of thalidomide before but had never seen a victim of it. A young, healthy man, born without arms, changed me forever. From the stage in the school auditorium he spoke to our school for an hour, and as he went, he played the saxophone, talked about going to College, his soccer exploits, and his position as a place kicker on the football team. He also talked about what it was like for people to stare at him and make comments everywhere he went.

This young man was a true hero. Someone who never gave up, who spread hope to so many people. I could hardly even imagine what he had been through. That very night I told my mom that I felt so bad that this unfortunate, birth-defected person had done so much while I had done nothing despite that there was nothing wrong with me. I actually in some odd way wished I had a disability, something to overcome. I didn't know at that age that sometimes a person gets what they wish for and it is more than they can handle.

Soon after that life-changing day, trying with all my might to be a better person but really having no way that I knew of to accomplish this task, I dove into a self-improvement kick. I quit drinking, quit smoking, started working out, and retreated into my schoolwork every free moment I had. Somewhere in that process something went desperately wrong. As the pressure built, I kept being harder on myself. I began to slip away from reality, and it didn't help at all that my parents wanted me out of their house. My dad and I were getting into serious fights and arguments on a daily basis.

I have no idea what set my illness off. All I know is that I started to have thoughts and ideas that no rational person would. I gave things away, fell into a deep, dark depression. My mind, my senses were filled with confusion. I was slowly going insane and had no clue what to do about it.

One day a friend came to pick me up to take a ride in his mom's sports car, and I just wasn't myself. I was nothing like myself in any way. My friend had the presence of mind to take me to a hospital and soon I was given a powerful injection, and taken by police to the provincial psychiatric hospital where I was confined to a seclusion room. One window with bars on it, nothing on the floor but linoleum, and the extreme luxury of a plastic mattress with no sheets.

Some of the staff there went way beyond the call of duty to try and help me, try and convince me that I still had a long and possibly fulfilling life ahead of me. It was so hard to see it because there were so many people there that all seemed to be beyond hope. Also, I couldn't understand that, although this had never happened before, it would happen again, and would never go away. I would need medications for the rest of my life. When they released me from that early hospital admission, I threw out my pills, and just days after, I picked a fight in one of my classes and was taken by police back to that horrible place and was kicked out of school.

It took years after that for me to find myself. None of the old rules for me applied any more. And when I kept failing at even simple things like going back to work in a factory I had once done well in, I thought I could run from my illness. Vancouver, California, hitch-hiking, riding a bus for days and walking when neither option was possible. Trouble was, I brought my brain with me. Each day was a struggle to keep sane. I did well for a while, though having bipolar disorder with symptoms of schizophrenia made me a very difficult person to be around. I made friends with a few people but none of them were around to help or support me when things really got bad for me. After another serious relapse hallucinations and delusions, I finally returned to Edmonton, accepted my diagnosis, and took my medication.

So much happened over those years. A thousand lifetimes lived and lost in dreaming or reading, sometimes even just lying in bed wondering what I could do if a pile of money was dropped in my hands, wondering if money, love, fame (or anything else) would do anything to solve my depression and acute feelings of hopelessness. More time was spent desperately trying to find some kind of work I could handle, and I have likely a hundred stories of charming my way into a job and then soon realizing I was unable to handle the pressure. I was in no condition to deal with working, but my poverty situation was dire. There were times I would go days without eating, I wasted away to a fraction of my former weight. I also needed to sleep 12 hours a day because of my medications. Nor could I work a job where there was much standing at all because when I was 19, I had done severe damage to my knees running 30 to 40 kilometres a week. I was dirt poor, I would often struggle and search just to find enough change to ride a bus or make a call from a payphone. The worst of it was that there seemed to be no hope, no future. Around age 25, after a harsh rejection from a young woman I once cared about, I took a near lethal overdose.

I lay in bed for days, unable to keep down any food and water. While I was comatose, my dad came by to visit and put twenty dollars under my door (something he had never done before or since). That money was enough to get me a cab to the hospital where I spent five days in intensive care. I wasn't supposed to have recovered, but miracles happen, and they happen for a reason.

I left the hospital with a badly damaged liver. After seeing how much I hurt my family and friends with my self-destructive and selfish act, I had a new determination that things were going to change. Life from then on wasn't perfect, but each moment, each sunrise and sunset was precious. They were borrowed moments, time I would never have had if no one had cared about me, if my sister hadn't taken the time to call from across the country to talk with me, if my Dad hadn't put that \$20 under my door.

I still became severely ill at times. Even though admitting you have a chronic illness is the first step to recovery, it is rarely the whole story. Once, while in psychosis, I took a tour of the Alberta legislature grounds and buildings and was so abusive and obnoxious that I was escorted off the property. It's a fact that people with mental illnesses are more often victims of violence than perpetrators of it. The misguided attitude that you can do anything, the poor choices you make, and the all too

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“ . . . to a life of acceptance ”

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common delusions of grandiosity are the cause. I needed to be in a hospital, and things were so serious this time I wasn't released for six whole months.

The story that begins after leaving the hospital after my six-month stay is where things finally begin to get better for me. I had a long incarceration, and I needed a longer recovery. Then finally I found a new job that I loved, spreading the word about stigma and mental illness by giving presentations for my local Schizophrenia Society. Soon came more part-time work teaching Wellness, Recovery, and Creative Writing courses to people who suffer from mental health issues. I feel very privileged because over the years so many people from my kind psychiatrist to my employers who supported and helped me made life bearable, even enjoyable at times. The years slid past and here I am. My own apartment, friends that I dearly love, and a family that has accepted me back into their small circle after hurting them

Steve

MARILYN SCHESKE

I first met him in a writing group: Wascana Writers. He had a way with words and a sardonic sense of humour. And a painful past. I continued to run into him at poetry readings and we would talk. He wrote short pieces about his life – a life plagued with various types of mental health issues. And he had a ball of anger in his belly about having been administered electric convulsive therapy (ECT) which had obliterated huge parts of his memory.

Steve was well acquainted with poverty and lived in a variety of low income apartments in downtown Regina. He wrote poems about the places he had lived and compiled the poems into little photocopied booklets which he sold at the Farmer's Market. I still have a copy of "*Hovels I Have Known*" somewhere. When his hovel had access to an alley or a backyard, Steve would hold a party and invite a wide variety of people. It was always a "Bring your own drink and snack" event and the conversation flowed. There was Dr. Peter Huston and his wife (Peter had labelled Steve a "*benevolent, off-beat genius*" and the description fit.) And David Johnson, the artist known for stained glass windows and sculptures that graced many downtown locations was usually there. A David Johnson sculpture still stands in the front of Connaught School on Elphinstone Street. And there were other writers and people who knew Steve from one situation or another. His parties were both fun and unpredictable.

Steve was periodically religious in his own way. During one summer, he attended mass in a downtown cathedral at noon, every single day without fail. His sister had become a nun, and Steve would often say, with something like longing or envy in his voice, "*My sister became a nun, took a vow of poverty and never missed another meal.*"

My good friend, Marg Hryniuk, and I had a practice each year, of visiting Steve before Christmas. I usually brought shortbread, because that happened to be the first item on my Christmas baking list. Marg would bring whatever goodies she had recently baked. Years later, Steve pulled me aside one day at some event, and said to me,

"You know, Marilyn, I cannot stand shortbread cookies. I've never liked them. I can't eat them. They choke me." I

so much when I was selfish or ill. How far have I come? One of the biggest things I have involved myself with is The Edmonton Story Slam community where I regularly write and tell stories on different themes. Recently I talked about my experience with mental illness and the work I do educating police recruits about mental illness and though I didn't win any prizes that day, I was approached by an amazing and intelligent young woman to write about my experience for a magazine in Toronto she works for. Also, I have gone from being kicked out of the provincial legislature for rudeness to being given a special recognition by Canadians For a Civil Society to participate in Human Rights Day in the same legislature. Am I a hero? I couldn't tell you, but in my long journey of growth and recovery, I think I may have come to a point where I have done more good than harm, and that is an incredible feeling.

thanked him for telling me (finally!!!) and told him I would definitely remember that.

At one of these "Christmas teas," Steve casually asked me what we were doing for New Year's. I said, "Oh, not much. Maybe have a few friends over. No big deal."

That year, on New Year's Eve, about 10 PM, a taxi rolled into our driveway, the doorbell rang, and Steve stood at the door with a big grin on his face, saying "Happy New Year." Steve knew nobody but my husband Ray and me, but he had never had a problem meeting people and soon he was actively engaged in various conversations. After we had sufficiently toasted the New Year, one of our friends offered Steve a ride home. I thanked Steve for coming. It had been good to have him there.

Steve kept in good touch with his friends by phone. But he became annoyed at my Message Manager that ate his quarters. He would say, "I don't want to spend a quarter to talk to your F----- answering machine!! The calls became fewer and farther apart.

One day Steve called to announce that he was moving to Toronto. He hoped the job prospects might be better there. True to form, he organized a farewell party and we all came to say goodbye. He boarded the bus the day after the party, knowing it would take him two to three days to get there. It seemed strange knowing Steve was no longer in town, that we would no longer see him at the Farmer's Market with his little chap books for sale. We missed him.

One week after the party, my phone rang and it was Steve! I enthusiastically asked him how he liked Toronto. I was eager to hear all his news.

"Oh" he said. "I'm back in Regina. Toronto didn't have a good vibe. So I hopped on the bus and came back home. I always told you Regina is a Venus fly trap."

Steve, in the past week, had been sitting on a bus for over 80 hours and he had spent close to \$500 to get to Toronto and back. But he was glad to be home. It was time for a "Welcome Home" party!

Steve's health was beginning to fail. Years of heavy smoking and poor nutrition, along with other health problems, had taken a toll. He moved to a rooming house in Moose Jaw and died not long afterwards. I didn't hear of his death until much later so missed attending his funeral. But the benevolent, off-beat genius had made his mark and he will be remembered.



The Frenchman was the White Mud

BY JOHN SCHMITT

If you are driving in the beautiful south west corner of Saskatchewan on Highway 4, 13, 21, or 37 near Shaunavon or Eastend, you might come to a pretty little river crossing or valley that will say “Frenchman.” If you wondered why the Frenchman, we all do, and here is my story.

When I was about ten I would go fishing with my Uncle¹ who always referred to this river as the White Mud. He would point out the hills along the valley with their deposits of white Kaolinitic clay. On his early maps of this area he would show me the White Mud River. In the 50's and 60's Everett Baker² would stop to visit as my family were very much into local history. Mr. Baker had many stories about the White Mud River and took many slides titled "White Mud River." A lot of the old time residents in the area also refused to call it the Frenchman. Like one said to me once, “That name just sticks in my craw.” Eastend’s famed author, Wallace Stegner³, relished this river, and in his book, *Wolf Willow* stated that in his time they called it the White Mud (p.6). Other local history writers also called it the White Mud. An unpublished manuscript by Harry Otterson⁴ (foreman of the famous T-Down ranch), “*Thirty Years Ago on the Whitemud River;*” states: “Most of the ranch houses were whitewashed with local white mud, for which the river is named and makes a pure white finish which is quite lasting and has a pleasant appearance” (p. 18).

Fast forward to a few years ago – I got to thinking why did this happen? I asked all the people I could think of, old time residents and people that had been in local government positions, and no one had any straight answer. There was some fuzzy mention of French fur traders naming it, which made no sense since they were not trading in the hills after the 1880's. Furthermore, the river must have been called something by the numerous different First Nations peoples that ventured into the hills.

When I began researching and reading about the river and searching all the maps I could find, I discovered that the Frenchman River appeared on some maps by about 1904. Before that time, from the 1880's to around 1903, it was still called the White Mud all the way from Cypress Lake to the Milk River on Canadian maps. Some U.S. maps had a Frenchman Creek on them. This creek was a little drainage off Pinto Horse Buttes near Val Marie which ran into the White Mud and likely named for the French Metis settlement near there.

* * *

So let’s go way back to the 1700's – The First Nations had to have a name for this River. I discovered the Atsina people (later called Gros Ventre) inhabited the Shaunavon (Eastend) area⁵. A'ani, A'aninin are the Atsina tribes autonyms meaning White Clay People. It made sense that they would call the river and valley White Clay. In the 1800's the Plains Cree and Assiniboine pushed these people out of southern Saskatchewan. The Cree name for our river would be *wapi tonisk sipi* or white clay stream. Claire Thomson has a recent blog on the net (May 13th/2020 titled “*Lakota Place Names in Southwestern Saskatchewan*”. She writes this (The White Mud

He would point out the hills along the valley with their deposits of white Kaolinitic clay. On his early maps of this area he would show me the White Mud River.

River (also known as the Frenchman River) near present-day Val Marie in southern Saskatchewan had a couple names in Lakota. The one was a literal translation of White Mud River, *Wisaŋye Wakpá* (White Paint River)⁶. First Nations people valued this white clay when mixed with water, tallow, or bear fat as ceremonial paint.⁷

The first map that shows the White Mud with detail is one from my Uncle’s collection, a 1888 North West Mounted Police map, with all the police trails and the White Mud River and Frenchman Creek off Pinto Horse Butte. I have pictures of maps from 1893, 1897, 1901, and 1903, all showing the White Mud River big as life. Suddenly for no good reason one map from 1903 has Frenchman River on it all the

way to the Milk River. Did the map maker get into the whoop up Juice with a Frenchman? We will never know! I believe it was either a simple mistake copying names on new maps or taking the U.S. name Frenchman C. off the little creek near Val Marie.

NOTES:

¹ Schmitt R.F. (Reg) 1891-1981: My uncle, my mentor, the "Grandfather" I never got to know. An old time bachelor, homesteader, local amateur historian, collector of everything old, and story teller.

² Everett Baker: <<http://www.shfs.ca/Baker>>

³ Stegner W.E. (1962) *Wolf Willow* Viking Press.

⁴ Otterson H. (Harry). (1938) “*Thirty Years Ago on the Whitemud River*” Unpublished manuscript.

⁵ Wikipedia: Aug 17th/2020

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shاونавон,_Saskatchewan

⁶ Claire Thomson May 13, 2020

<https://www.skhistory.ca/blog/lakota-place-names-in-southwestern-saskatchewan>

⁷ Paul G. July 21, 2011 <<https://www.powwows.com/face-painting-traditions-among-men-of-the-plains/>>

Poems from a play

BY TILLEN BRUCE

[Excerpts from a long dramatic poem
about memory and obligation]

A cold lunch with Father

A cold lunch with Father:
rugged, handsome, father.

I had only two pictures of him
growing up,
and both scavenged
from my mother's dresser drawer
not long after he left.
In one he is helping her into the car,
gathering up in his arms
the train of the wedding dress; in the other
he is sitting in uniform on a fence,
between two Dutch girls
sometime after the liberation of Holland.

How grateful they must have been
that he also looked like a 1930's
Hollywood Matinee Idol:

Errol Flynn, if you really must know.

I insisted upon an explanation,
about the abandonment, besides tears,
hers and mine.
Something more substantial;
so as not to remain wondering
what part of us he did not love.

Perhaps a letter found in a cairn
in the High Arctic;
or a glass bottle retrieved from the sea
by a boy in a boat.
I was stubborn at ten.

I would mail them to Mother,
who thought it was a dreadful game,
but who read them aloud at the kitchen table,
because of their artistry.

"...the dogs have not eaten in three days,
but the Pole is only a hundred miles away.
The blizzard will make visibility difficult,
and the journey more than a little dangerous,
but it is either now,
or wait through to the next winter.
Scott and I have decided to strike out on foot,

we leave tomorrow morning. I love you
my darlings."

"...the clouds socked me in...
navigation impossible,
I dropped the plane so low the waves
were slapping at the landing gear,
and then I saw it, with nothing left
in the petrol tanks but fumes...an island.
The sandy beach my only
chance for a safe landing...
What did it matter,
if the place looked uninhabited---
rescue would come eventually.

I hope this message is one day
recovered from the sea.
I love you my darlings."

Mother liked the desert island scenario best:
dying like a dog of thirst and starvation.

Supper with Mother

Supper with Mother --
who taught resilience.

All her loose change
and my paper route money
went into the jar
for emergencies
for Christmas.
I never knew what it took
to keep the wolf from the door;
and so I hated her for it—
that demanding hand
and a meager allowance
returned to me.

Always surprised the first time
that it was a girl who had come
to collect. Nothing but hills
on that paper route—doors opening into
scenes of comfort and money;
forget about tips at Christmas.

Had one good coat for winter,
a black Mouton,
because of the three mile walk to work.

The night shift at the hospital,
always home to make me breakfast,
see me out the door to school; prepare supper.



Walk back on her lunch hour, to check on me,
 if there was a fever, because I would be alone.
 I watched her leave when I was older
 from my second-floor bedroom window;
 her like a crow against the white snow,
 and then her gone as she passed
 into a landscape of darkened houses,
 where everyone slept save her.
 In her head she talked out the future,
 listed the things that didn't matter,
 named the people who wouldn't stay,
 and felt, in the cold,
 for a love that would never leave her--
 like that Mouton she loved so much.

My mother—who taught resilience,
 and that the wolf was always at the door.

I am simpler than you paint me.

I am simpler than you paint me.
 Not cloaked, no cutting tool,
 I don't hiss in the room where
 you sleep before passing away;
 if you have a room.

I come when called; I do not do the

work itself—Time is the one you should
 blame for that. Poor Leadership always
 helps: and no one should start a war
 without weighing the cost. Sometimes
 there are accidents and sometimes
 you yourself are to blame, bad
 decision making, and drinking and
 driving is beyond stupid.

I am not invented; I am not to blame,
 and my creation has nothing to do with myth.
 God could not have man without Death.

Mother liked the desert island scenario best:
 dying like a dog of thirst and starvation.

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Longhorns in the desert by Joyce Kirby

UEBER ALLEN GIPFELN IST RUH' ¹

BY VICTOR ENNS

None of us three will choose
caskets and burial none of us three
believe there is anything after all
this has passed. I doubt father
or mother did either, but played
the Christians right to the end.

Mom's last words "I've lived a good life."
Dad's last words "It's hard." That's the nub
losing consciousness, losing control
one last time, and then no more
thinking, I like to think, in the angel's mind
there are no brains that stop.

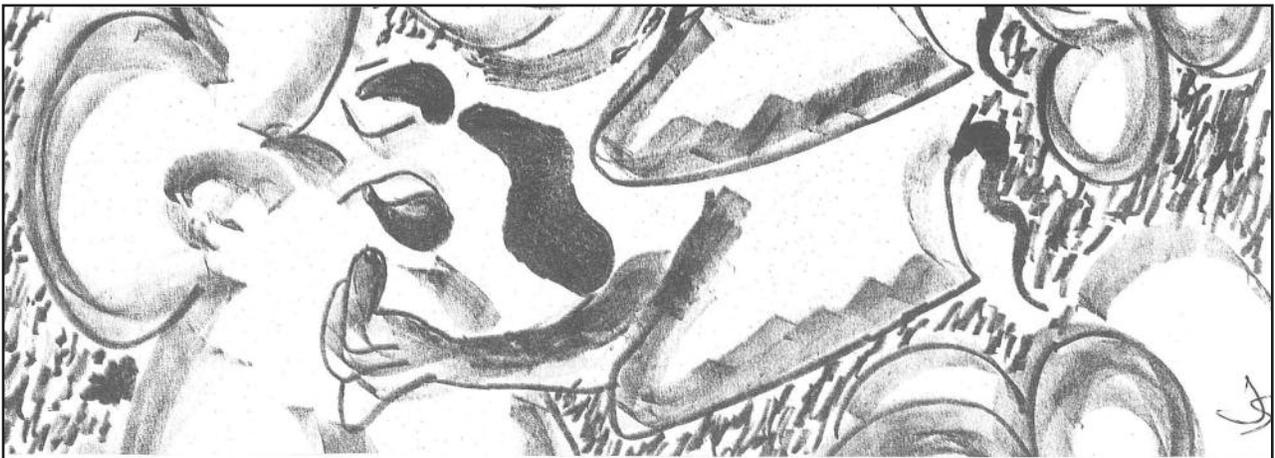
While I still can, as my mother would say,
I want to keep it open my mind
I want to keep it open my heart
I want to keep them open my senses.
I've signed my body to the school of medicine.
My last lesson teaches students all, all is vanity.

The worst day of my life (so far)

BY VICTOR ENNS

Except the day my son was having his brain tumour out
Except the day my son survived a head on collision on number eight
Except the day my daughter was brutalized on Portage Avenue
Except the night I drove drunk on the wrong side Henderson after grad
Except the day I drove drunk missing coeds by inches
Except the night I slept on the boulevard first marriage dead but not me
Except each worst day piles on igniting burning my gray matter to cinders
No day could be worse than today with every worst day to remember.

¹ Title of Goethe's poem, said to be the most perfect lyric ever written



Art by James Skelton



POSTPARTUM

BY CAROL GARVIE

[This poem was wrongly attributed to Neil Garvie in
TRANSITION Spring 20 (14). Apologies – Editor.]

grey hues sadness confusion
depression gluts my thinking hailstones
strike my window sombre black shatters
the world into a thousand pieces

displaced running aimlessly along an
ink-sack path left from cuttlefish fleeing
a husband two young children a home
emptiness forebodes *a will to*

question? but what? desperately alone
in sunken indifference scarlet-flamed
emotions conflict racing wild running
running on misguided intentions

misaligned truisms anxious thoughts
perplex death threatens identity fractures
robbing me of purpose sifting through
the muddle in solitude I ponder

life without me desolate thoughts lost
and found edges keep swirling torturing
my troubled heart in devil's abyss dying
many times-over I cannot hear

nor trust those once dear on a road of
transparent destruction unconscious psyche
moves in accord with an abstract
dimension buried souls

interconnecting screaming many
minds many *what am I doing?* heavy
undertones stifle my thinking *will I ever*
understand? on hands and knees staring

into a white porcelain bowl a consequence
of blind will illicit consumptions collaps-
ing

my body lay crumpled on terracotta
tiles then sometime
later in negative space *is this*
death? is death life? a critical crossroad
I plead mercy a voice only the weary
hear calls me

dragging myself across the floor
deliberately I rise placing one foot in
front of the other each day an echo
a blessing a light evolving



Art by Henry Peters

Third Eye on the ground

[As printed in TRANSITION Spring 20 (17), this poem was missing its last stanza. Apologies – Editor.]

BY gillian harding-russell

One, two grosbeaks swoop through frozen air—
and light on a tall gathering of Ponderosa pine branches
that crackle in the cold. A third wrestles a thin seed

from a cone angled like a pupil
in a seeing eye and, in a splash of sunlight
their breasts are jewelled ruby and olive

before twilight behind a cloud returns.
My daughter 2000 kilometres to the north
and my son 2000 kilometres to the east

and, in a flash of sunlight, I see
my daughter climbs shield rock,
foxes that watch at the edge

of her vision on her way
to the school where she teaches
small children

while my son wrestles with bread dough
and himself to have his small word
on the world.

Why one child lights on ambiguous
natural spirits, gold-furred and black-legged
that may be her guardian angels

and my son fights himself
would-be demons
I do not know.

A cone in the dry cold may be blown
by a nor'wester kilometers away
or drop to the ground, its seed mingle
(or perish)

distances away, melt with the snow
and travel natural waterways to new life
beneath our feet to become those towering

orange-legged ones of luxuriant green
with plentiful small cones that grosbeak grace
with a transcendent visit

from time to time, if one keeps an eye open
open between flashes of sunshine
and cloud's grey. Just this memory

of grosbeaks' rosy magic at 30 below
in a sheltered space immune to the wind,
scattered third eyes that gaze up from the ground.

MELANIE MCFARLANE

The First Memory

Sun bleaches sky.
I'm shaded by Mom until she
bends, weeding
our garden set
in a reclaimed field

I sit in front of garden steps
my fists full of dirt, each
chubby hand making its way
to my lips, tongue turning
dirt to mud in my mouth

A short memory. It rests easy
filed away before dreams
before heartache
before cubicles and mortgages
panic attacks and parenthood.

Today, when warm winds
blow wisps of prairie
dust into my mouth
my tongue takes me
back to that garden.

Going Steady

Sometimes I get too comfortable
forget your short fuse.
It explodes behind your soft brown eyes
beneath your army-issued haircut
by hands that know how to hurt but never bruise.

Just because your dad is your stepdad
who commands with an iron fist
doesn't mean you should love with one, too.
He's taught you more than you'll admit.

I learn to run on autopilot around you,
I cringe when your tone changes,
brace myself for impact.

At the first chance to escape
I flee, but you chase me down.

Don't bother—I'll never be (*love*)struck again.



to say there is poetry

BY LYNDA MONOHAN

in the bright impossible grin
of a young man who can neither hear nor speak
a young man who ranges the ward
in a paper hat that declares him St. Patrick
to say there is poetry in the random words and symbols
he painstakingly puts to paper

in the bone thin face of a tiny woman
caught in the cage of dementia
who sits primly her eyes shining
head poised like a delicate bird
when she tells me
I am so lost
my family doesn't know I am here

or in the shuffle of a middle aged woman
who touches the small pearls at my earlobes
and says I don't allow myself pretty things

in the whey faced man
crouched in a corner
nursing his coffee
his eyes a wilderness of infinite gray
despair a garment he wears
as surely as his hospital blue pajamas

in each man and woman here
in all their vulnerability and their humanity
in this place there is poetry everywhere

touch

BY LYNDA MONOHAN

for hours she has lain awake
listening to the grumbling thunder
the whip and snap of wind

something in her wants to rise up
step out into the bucketing rain

to stand there at the edge of storm
reach up to let a quick flick of lightning
touch her outstretched fingertips

this desire she has always known
this longing that lives in her

to give herself to the darkness
to be swallowed by the furious night

just something to remember

BY LYNDA MONOHAN

sharing a bag of store bought cookies
on a winter Wednesday morning
with a handful of guys
at the drop in center
isn't a poem

even though they dig into those cookies
like it was their last meal
even though there is a ritual to it
Ian sitting next to me
always the one to open the Peak Freans or Oreos

even though this place
is the very heart of life
to every one of them
and its home in the sense that
here they can grab a cup of coffee or a nap
and its where they feel cared for
when life is just too difficult
and they've lost who it is
they're supposed to be

this couldn't be poetry
even though they caught the bus to be here
on this minus forty morning
stamping their frozen feet
in rundown running shoes
that do nothing to keep out the cold

poetry? no
just something to remember
when you feel life isn't adding up
the way love can sometimes exactly equal
a bag of store bought cookies
shared among friends

the song

BY LYNDA MONOHAN

maybe because we're driving
on our way to Saskatoon
maybe because we're in this car together
for the next two hours
and they want to fill the space between us
they begin to speak their stories

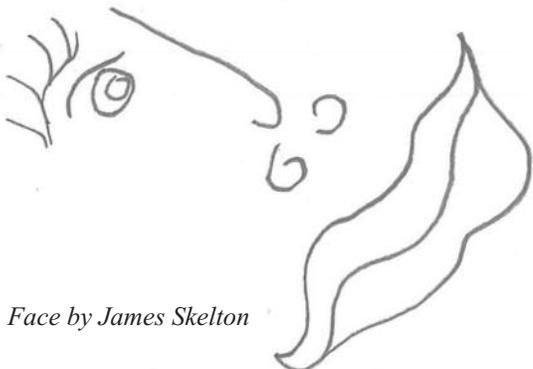
Holly tells me
about her time in North Battleford
the loony bin she calls it
electric shock treatments
that left her with holes in her memory
she says she wrote a song once
but she no longer remembers the words

and Randy speaks of living on the streets
of Calgary doing drugs in forty below back alleys
sleeping in shelters or under stairwells
digging for food in restaurant dumpsters
sometimes he says life was like
a wad of old chewing gum

I listen quietly
because that is what they need me to do
to bear witness to what they are telling me
of suffering

the trip takes longer
because they want to stop at Tim's for coffee
or for a smoke
standing shivering in thin jackets
at the shoulder of the road

sometimes Holly says
taking in a deep drag
a few words will come back to me
yeah Randy says
one day you'll remember the song



Face by James Skelton

Christmas at the drop-in centre

BY LYNDA MONOHAN

like a favorite song
you sing over and over
the music moving inside you
Dolly Parton on the old stereo
belting out
fine and dandy
Lord its like a hard candy Christmas

no fancy gifts no giant decorated tree
a community kitchen lunch
and a man in a faded pink Santa suit
handing out cheap chocolates
to a raggedy bunch
of unpampered people

Dolly's voice lifting
I'm barely getting through tomorrow
But still I won't let sorrow bring me down

and joy in the shabby room
filling every corner with a song
I cannot nor ever want to forget

Figurehead

BY CHELSI ROBICHAUD

There's that old cliché of Perseus' ship
again, back to haunt me. How much must
I change before I am a different person?
Until I have a purpose? My ship is new,
my figurehead striking and calling out for
a brighter future. Why then do I long to
switch places with her? I wish for liberty.

I wish to be like the figurehead: a beacon
of beauty, of protection, whose purpose
is only to exist. How I envy her. How I'd like
to trade places with her. She is called upon
only when is needed. Otherwise, she rests,
looking serenely to the sky above. I, on the
other hand, hide in the darkness.

My planks, although new and polished,
crumble to dust under fire. She remains,
her body of wood resilient against the
elements. If only I could be carved and
retrieved only when needed. Silence would
penetrate my senses entirely, but how else
would I have it? For I can never be like my
sea-weathered goddess.



I recognize your pain

BY CHELSI ROBICHAUD

I recognize your pain. It is often a secret, introspective thing. We might share it with others, but the experience is mostly hidden. But I recognize yours.

At times, I feel like I am caught in a ballroom dance with figures masked in black. They swirl around me, listening but not hearing. They all move so quickly.

You, however, wear no mask. I can see the fine details of your face. The way your tears have become scars. If I could, I would reach out to you and caress your face.

When I look at you, I see years of fatigue. Your brow is heavy, and your eyes bruised. But what strikes me most is the words I can see spilling from your eyes: "Please, make me forget". I wish I could.

Forgetting would be a sweet poison, but it is one reserved for those who have passed on. You and I, we must feel it. We must breathe through brittle lungs and remain true to our façade.

I recognize your pain. For now, I must put your mask back on. You must rejoin those figures, and the spinning, scintillating evening. Mine will remain discarded. For I recognize your pain, but I will not feel it.

Then descended

BY ROLLI

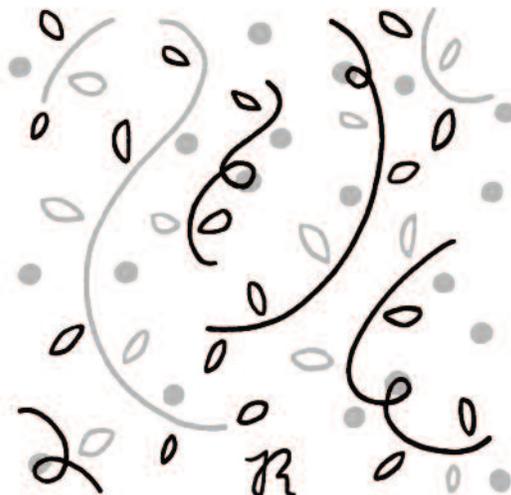
Then descended
the virtuous
birds

and severed
the heads
of our ethically
flawed
artists

*There is nothing
so pure*

(we hastily
agreed)

*as a bare-
walled
gallery*



Whispering in the leaves by Rolli

I felt so poorly so

BY ROLLI

I felt so poorly so

I picked
up a shovel

and began
digging

As family
gathered

friends and
citizens

shedding their
alarms
and criticisms

I continued

glancing
through black back on
occasion

the waning
faces

And when
I saw no men

and scented
not one
breath
of censure
then

I rested

In the middle
of earth
and sweating

yes

I felt better

The condemned man

BY ROLLI

The condemned man
Select
they said
the method

and the condemned
man's last
words were

Please
the guillotine

kneeling
appreciative of
the democracy
of options

as the cold
blade
lowered

As the boring poets spoke (spoken word)

BY ROLLI

As the boring poets spoke
I warred
the urge to burst in-
to laughter or
slaughter

(the art of listening)

I in the end
succumbed
to both whims

pressing
their dead
flesh

between leaves
of their freshest
collections

the lone
place no
men
would find them

My very dreary friend

BY ROLLI

My very dreary friend
old Doldrum
me these slippers gifted
of cement

lead vest and
gaudy wrought
iron crown

which I don
all perpetually as not
to appal him

*Diary—but one
more atom
of his magnanimity will*

*I fear me
at last
collapse*



The dream man by Rolli

White Luminous Cube

BY JAMES SKELTON

I sat in the gallery and stared, transfixed with the painting/multimedia piece on the wall. I got lost there, in that moment in time, and became suspended in time; as the clock that had a minute hand in that painting bumped back and forth to the hour of four. A minute hand, a minute hand that time played. There was an ocean spray scent from the painting which wafted off the palm fronds at the edge of the frame. I stared and stared. Time disappeared.

I don't know if I'm still there somehow.
A 25-year-old man at an art gallery
near the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal.

Two figures were in that painting, alone, yet not alone.
Am I in the painting with the clock and the sea spray?
Ayyayeyeaye-I-I-I-I!

Another lifetime.
I'm living in two worlds.
Here I sit in the gallery.
There is a painting on the wall.
I write in my journal about how
this painting has pulled me, and drawn me in.
But it is not a painting, it is a cube.

My life has changed in so many ways.
I have grown in years with this white cube.
There is ideology that isn't really ideology at all, it just is.
There are sounds of waves that come from inside the cube.
There is an ocean, vast and deep.
There is also part of the Amazon forest.

The cube is impossible to enter, except with the mind.
There, I can go, and be, Anywhere...



The girl in the mirror

BY DANICA SCHOFIELD

I hate her.
 I hate her just as much as I hate tight pants
 I hate her.
 I guess I'm a bully
 I yell at her
 I constantly remind her just how ugly she is
 How fat she is
 I tell her she is worthless
 And that she is stupid.
 I say she is unlovable
 Like a small fish in a big tank she will always be lonely.
 She does her hair nice and wears makeup
 I laugh at her attempts.
 "Nothing will hide your ugliness"
 I scorn her like a mother scorns her child
 She wears fancy clothes and I laugh
 "You're too fat to wear nice things"
 the girl in the mirror
 I hate her.
 Though its not her fault...
 I know we aren't supposed to blame others for our problems,
 But I blame my mom.
 Mom yelled and abused
 At ten I was told I was a mistake
 I shouldn't have been born.
 And I believed her,
 I still do.

The girl in the mirr
 I hate her.
 I hate her because
 She's like my mom.
 She's a monster
 Controlled by her own monsters
 Monsters named
 Depression.
 ADHD.
 Anxiety.

Monsters in her head,
 Destroying her,
 Destroying me.
 They claw at her skin,
 Leaving red marks

The girl in the mirror
 I hate her.
 I cry, watching her fall in a bottomless pit of despair
 Feelings of loneliness
 Never amounting to anything
 Never being good enough
 Never being worthy
 Worthy of love
 Worthy of compassion
 Worthy of acceptance.
 That girl in the mirror?
 I hate her.
 I don't know how to love her
 I will never be able to love her.

On the Edge of a Soul

BY MELISSA YUAN-INNES

A baby girl is conceived
 To the sound of the ocean waves
 After years silently hoped and grieved.

Her parents' dreams begin to weave
 How their babe might think or misbehave
 A baby girl is conceived.

First ultrasound brings a first reprieve
 The baby's heartbeat never waives
 After years silently hoped and grieved.

Next sonogram: Adam'ed or Eve'd?
 Babe's legs block that knowledge parents craved.
 (A baby girl is conceived.)

Panic when mother starts to bleed;
 Will her or baby's life be saved
 After years silently hoped and grieved?

The cord between mom and babe is cleaved.
 Baby squints at the world that she has braved.
 A baby girl is conceived
 After years silently hoped and grieved.

Home

BY MELISSA YUAN-INNES

a deck of cards scatters across the floor
 the boy cries
 the baby screeches
 the mother holds her head

the boy cries
 the mother tries to nurse
 the mother holds her head
 the baby bites

the mother tries to nurse
 the boy cries louder
 the baby bites
 the mother yells

the boy cries louder
 the baby screeches
 the mother yells
 a deck of cards scatters across the floor

Eastend writer hangs out the wash

BY TED DYCK

Steinman Brotherton, Reesa
Melba's Wash
 Guernica Editions, 2019
 212 pp. \$20

[Disclosure: This reviewer did an evaluation of the manuscript for the author before the book was published. This review is based in large part on that evaluation. T/]

The novel follows the life of Esther from her birth in Grand Manan to Russell and Melba Girling (*alias* Skunk), through childhood in Montreal, to her adulthood

and [apparent] suicide in Grand Manan. A baby Esther is “given” by her mother, the hapless Melba, to her sister Flora and her wealthy partner Sammy to be raised as their child in Montreal. She is returned to Melba in her pre-teens when Sammy is murdered. She leaves the hateful situation on the Island for Halifax with her friend Liz in her mid-teens. Soon she is forced to move in with Melba, who has inherited Flora’s money, abandoned her husband, and found a new partner in Halifax. There she meets Alec, falls in love, and marries him. After 30 years and raising two children in Calgary, the marriage breaks up. Esther attempts suicide, eventually ends up in High River near her daughter Rachel, where she lives through the flood of 2013. Her son Sean returns her to the Island where she reunites with a favourite sister, Frieda. As soon as Esther establishes that she is indeed not Russell’s daughter, she drives her car off the cliffs into the sea. The novel is a contemporary tragedy – which is to say that its tragedy is not the *loss of life* but a *lost life*.

There is never any doubt that this is Esther’s story: she is the centre of the action in all except Part II (chapters 8-15, some 40 pp) which traces the story of Melba’s and Flora’s frugal beginnings in New Brunswick until they move to Grand Manan and Montreal, respectively. Esther is a fully “rounded” character – we watch her from her pampered childhood in Montreal, through a devastating return to her mother in Grand Manan, to a good albeit fated marriage in Calgary, and return with her to

Grand Manan. We recognize her situation in two dysfunctional families; we understand her frustration and rage as the outward manifestations of a fragile identity and a fear of abandonment. Her “suicide” is a fit ending for her character and her life.

Not only is Esther the central character, she is also central to the novel’s narration – either as the first-person narrator (as in the prologue and the epilogue) or as the sensibility of the third-person narrator in the bulk of the book. The technical name of the latter is *free indirect discourse* [FID], which is arguably the most efficient and natural storytelling technique. Its third-person distance is focalized through a first-person sensibility or expression; it layers the uber-narrator/author’s [often ironic] commentary over the performative voice of the character (here, Esther) in a seamless shift from character to narrator

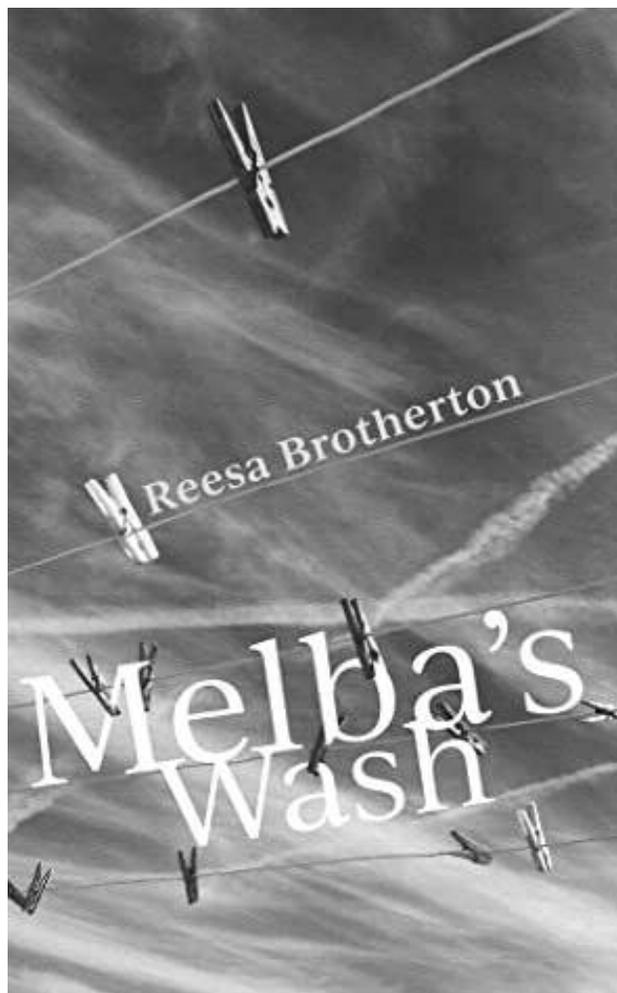
and back, from past to present and back, cued by the familiar signifiers (person, time, place) of direct speech. The novel is liberally suffused with the author’s brilliant use of this technique.

FID, a significant form of narration since at least Flaubert, yields to direct first person narration in another traditional touch – the novel’s prologue and epilogue. The author makes excellent use of this structure to bracket the whole novel, as the prologue’s last statement mirrors the epilogue’s first statement. I leave the pleasure of learning the significance of this link to the reader; here I remark only that its effect is totally and distinctly other-worldly.

I confess that I found the original manuscript’s title, “Dark Harbour,” far superior to the novel’s final one, “Melba’s Wash.” Yes, the latter phrase is used in its literal/metaphoric sense twice in addition to the novel’s title; “Dark Harbour” appears literally and metaphorically twice in the manuscript as well as once in its former title; and both are vehicles of their tenors, the texts which they

name. But the direction and reach of these metaphorical vehicles could not be more different: low vs. high; small vs. large; mundane vs. moral; and, especially, comedic vs. tragic. As I said earlier in this review, this novel’s tragedy “is not the *loss of life* but a *lost life*.”

Thanks, Reesa, it was my pleasure to work alongside you and the Eastend WFYL Group the last several years.





THE WFYL FALL 2020 CONTEST

Sponsor: **Byrna Barclay**

Creator and Judge: **Irene Grobowsky**

Write a poem with a title and ten to twelve lines describing the main noun in the title without using that noun in the poem. For example, a poem about measles would have the word measles in the title, followed by 10-12 lines describing measles in which the word measles does NOT appear.

Judge's comments

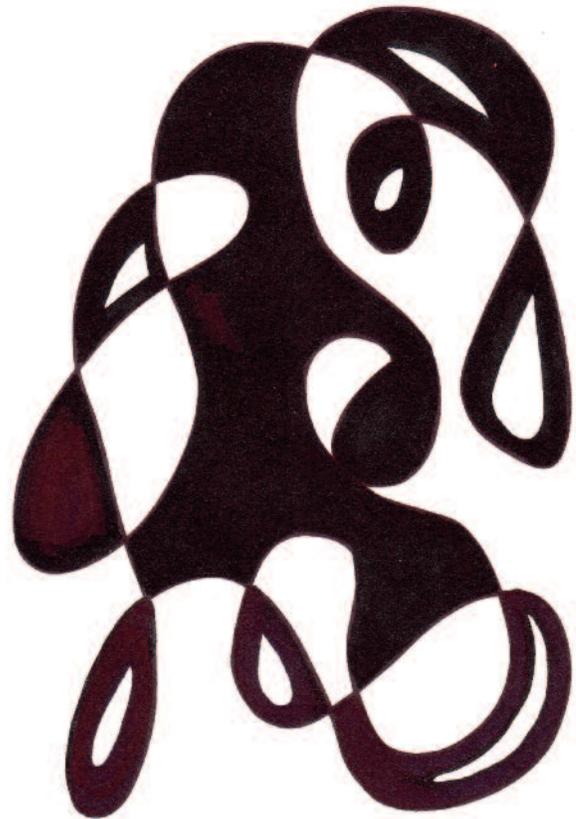
Submissions were not limited to nouns of concrete items, but included those descriptive of feelings and abstract concepts, the latter being predominant. Altogether an impressive list of entries.

First place (\$100) to Stephen Dunster's "Distance": Effects of the corona virus pandemic are conveyed in three snapshot stanzas. Repetition reinforces the strength of this poem.

Second place (\$75) goes to Glenna Gordon's "Fear": This poet writes of coming to grips with an emotion that refuses to be controlled. The imagery is vivid.

Third place to (\$50) to Jennifer Morin's "Painting Art": Visualization goes beyond colours to the heart of what art is about —reaching both the artist and the viewer in unexpected ways.

Honourable mention (\$25) goes to Jayne Melville Whyte's "Poetry": Playing with words is fun for this writer. A good piece for reading aloud and enjoying the rhythms of speech.



Art by Henry Peters



TED DYCK

WFYL
DIRECTOR



Canadian
Mental Health
Association
Saskatchewan
Division Inc.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The WFYL Spring 2021 Contest will be judged by Ted Dyck:

Write a poem against the sonnet.

Details shortly available from your Facilitators

FEAR

GLENNA GORDON

I straddle it
a movie cowboy
on a runaway horse.
The animal body twisting
between my gripped knees.
One frayed rein dangling
out of reach.
Its hooves pounding
the turning earth
echoing my heart

GRIEF

CAITLIN MCCULLAM-ARNAL

Grandma told stories—true or not
My brother— drunk—stole the truck
her eyes dry, throat clear
didn't see the slough— drove straight in— drowned
Eleanor, don't drink and drive
But— Granny— your pain
My turn came
Grocery store—bread aisle— hello, good morning,
I am well, rotten river runs, crashes into my skull
My face covered in smiling sores
I leak stink, soak all my epidermis
my pinky toe—even a little hang nail

ISOLATION

SHERRY FAVREAU

The outside is freedom, this is not real
I sit on my bench gazing at the sky, its what I feel
I'm okay. Every now and then sadness creeps in
All this is wearing thin, a month feels like eternity
Who really knew this would come and what and where from
Some day soon we will be out, not just on the phone,
I am okay. Yet in my thoughts at times its so surreal
It just can't be real and, God willing, it will go away
As fast as it came, but things will never be the same
And maybe it will be better, the tears shed
will make a river of serenity and peace for all
The curtain of darkness will rise and there will be light again

FOR INTERVENTION

AYAMI GREENWOOD

Very early in the morning I arise
I am meant to invent myself
For the day as an offering to the divine
I prepare myself this way
I prize the sacred ritual of humility;
A prayer for my creation
It's a precious, potent prayer I say
For, with faith, all comes true
Every intention comes through
Blessed into manifestation, glory, oh glory!
In disguise of reality aware I see!
Let me be adorning for the day!

BELIEVING

WENDEL GUEDO

Deceiving
Receiving
Redeeming and screaming
Why all this dreaming
About a place called Hell
I even tell of Heaven
If you were as scared of Hell as I
You might believe
Jesus, I am desperate
To love you, Help me!

AFTER THE PANDEMIC

HOLLY KNIFE

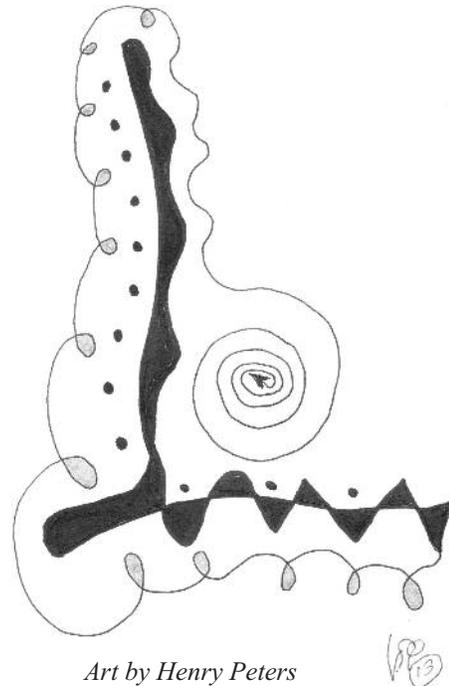
Let there be no sorrow in tomorrow
May it be a better day
Something to look forward to
Let's do nice things for one another
Let others know how special they are
Give each other small gifts of kindness
Crafts of bark and twigs
Give the gift of Mother Earth

*[The facilitator of the Regina WFYL Group
was wrongly identified in TRANSITION
Spring 2020. Apologies – The Editor]*

POETRY

JAYNE MELVILLE WHYTE

Free forms foretell vigor and originality
Nouns nuance new notions
Propose perfunctory profound perfection
Scintillate similes like sparks hitting photons
Reverberating verbs venture forth
Roar restless rhetoric
Lift life in literary lyrics
Metronomic metaphors mark rhythmic breath
Sibilant sounds slice the silence
Open onomatopoeia explorations
Ay be see dee E ef ... why said
Words to say what words cannot express



Art by Henry Peters

DISTANCE

STEPHEN DUNSTER

It's nice outside now.
 Have I caught you standing in-line?
 Standing on a piece of tape,
 six feet away from everyone?

It's nice outside now.
 People are raking their leaves
 Six feet apart from their neighbours
 They stand and chat.

It's nice outside now.
 Their kids are in the backyard
 There are no friends playing with them
 Only Mom and Dad, the dog and the cat.

BEAR

SAMANTHA HANSEN

Such a lovely mammal
 So full of spirit
 So vigorous in its pursuit
 of all life has to offer it.
 Slumber 'til the early Spring,
 Berries and honey in the late fall,
 'Til it's belly is full
 And all is well
 To start the winter sleep
 A mating call
 A call to mama
 Little ones growing
 Big on their feet
 The forestlands provide
 They take it all in stride
 They are the glorious
 They are king
 Meet them
 And they will make your heart sing
 If they don't eat you first!

TIME

BRIAN PRIEST

It was a beautiful day in the month of May
 We were young restless and eager to play
 The club was busy and people were bustling
 Everybody seemed to know where they were going
 The time went by quickly those were the days when
 Life was so important and now it does not mean a damn thing,
 to have to hustle
 Our lives were so important and then
 Nothing matters in this hectic world, and life is so fragile
 We can't blame each other because it would only make it worse
 We're in this together my friends so let's get it right



Art by James Skelton

RELATIONSHIPS

DEREK SARAZIN

A year before we broke up
 we started saying are goodbyes.
 Maybe it was the right choice,
 maybe it was wise.
 U kept on pushing me away

I was sick for a long time. I wasn't really there.
 Caught up in illusions,
 I didn't have care
 I kept pushing u away
 Now I am home to myself and I'm thinking of you.
 I wouldn't change a thing if u asked me to.
 I look back on everything that was said.
 I admit to my wrongdoing and I put it to rest.
 So i can stop pushing u down

SYSTEM

JAMES SKELTON

Institutionalized
 Oppressed
 Labelled and Confined
 Force-Medicated into a chemical straightjacket
 Is the suffering of a man interesting?
 Surveillance
 I feel like I'm being watched
 Am I hallucinating?
 Is it the medication, or just the tension and the malaise of the times?
 What choice do I have?
 You are impossible to ignore
 Chattering, Chattering, Chattering, Chattering Mind...
 Free me from the Fishbowl
 I no longer want to be painted with the Stigma brush

PLAYGROUND

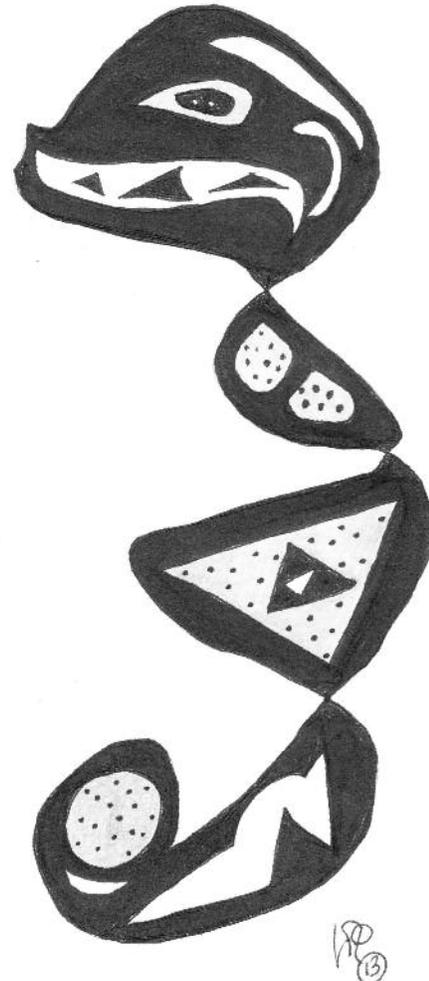
BRENDA STRETCH

Dear Hearts, Precious Bumpkins.
 all out to enjoy my special playground
 entering to greet familiar puppy that's eight
 meet bobbin head and tail, a toy turtle named Zeus
 happy to frolic, quickly to discarding their jackets
 Teddy, five and Leanne, three
 so excited over freedom to explore Flipper's squeaky toys
 tail wagging she yelps in a frenzy, "playtime"
 second love is eyeballed, hard candy
 with keen curiosity they chatter
 while exercising their whims
 of exploring front playground.

COMFORT

JAMES SNYDER

Do you believe in a love at first sight?
 I do, I do. I believe I might
 Carry a torch for someone like you,
 Someone special, someone true.
 This love we have is never spent
 But always is Heaven sent
 To comfort our souls in this life,
 Forever keeping us from this strife
 That easily besets us on this earth
 Right from day one, right from birth.
 So if you need a friend who cares
 Trust in Jesus...he always shares
 The secrets of our soul
 The spirit within the coal.



MUSIC

KEVIN BELLEMARE- PROKOPETZ

1. You can be creative in this world with all kinds of sounds
 It has been around since the beginning of time
 I love playing all types of instruments
 There are many genres in this world
 It can alter moods
 These superstars sell out arenas
 Movies play its soundtracks
 The heartbeat of it is called percussion
 The groove of it is the bass in the flow
 Guitar is its treble proportion
 Its flow brings people together

GRANDCHILDREN

DEBRA CARLSON

My love for them is everlasting
 They make me laugh
 I have a lot of fun with them
 They are very unique in their own ways
 Their love for me is unconditional
 They are all beautiful
 They all have a pet
 They are my kids, kids
 The oldest one looks after the younger ones
 They all have blue eyes and blonde hair



Looking for lunch by Joyce Kirby

CHILDREN

NINA CHAD

They are my Family
 Yet they are all so different
 They are young and innocent
 They play around with each other doing games
 I like dressing them up and buying them things
 They make mommy happy
 They grow up too fast
 They all live on their own now
 They make me cry when they say goodbye
 We write letter s to each other
 I miss them

FOOTBALL

LARRY LAUDER

The game is everything to the fans
 Throw the ball as well at a target
 Running the ball down the field
 Kicking the ball as well
 When they score they get 6 points
 Field goals are 3 points
 People watch the game because it's exciting
 Terribly fun, what the game is about
 The fans cheer
 The game is colourful
 What a swell game to watch and enjoy

NIGHTMARES

JENNIFER MORIN

Laying in a bed of pillows
 It is the softest bed ever
 You close your eyes
 You can feel yourself relaxing
 The events of your day play through your brain
 The darkness seeps in
 The monsters wake up
 They run around your brain
 Bouncing off the grey matter
 Its sends shocks through you
 You wake up screaming

PAINTING ART

JENNIFER MORIN

The colour splashes across the canvas
 Blues, greens, and of course purple
 The brushes filled with ideas
 Abstract designs mean more then you know
 Colours represent the emotions
 Using the brush violently on the paper
 Concepts and interpretations are shown
 All in the eyes of the beholder
 Sketching the black lines of life
 Naked pages mean just as much

SOUL

GARETTE STRONGARM

I can't climb as high as i want
 I could fall once of twice
 I can't break one or two
 So I fall once or fall twice
 Breaking a bone or two as alone as I was
 I could break my arm with no wings attached
 With no wings gone and no wings attached
 I could break my wings with no strings attached
 As long as I live in one piece, I forgive
 To live once and forgive
 To live twice I rest my noggin
 With a nest to rest on and no place to go home to

MUSIC

BARRY STYRE

I used to own records
 Then I went to cassettes
 Now I listen to CD's
 I used to play my harmonica
 While listening to records
 I used to play it loud on my record player
 Just to spite my parents when they were fighting
 My collection was vast
 Beatles- Rolling Stones
 Blood, Sweat and Tears- Beach Boys
 Chicago- Leon Russel

VOLLEYBALL

ERIC VALENTINE

I am writing about a game
 I have played it in different places
 It's not difficult to play
 I am a good server and bumper
 You can play it in a gym or on the sand
 It is very common in younger people
 You can wear any type of clothing, like shorts or bathing suits
 You can play with 2-6 people on each side of the net
 It can be done for fun or as a competition
 I have played it as a teenager and in Air Cadets in Cold Lake



Notes on contributors

ARTISTS

KIRBY, JOYCE
Member of CMHA Estevan Arts Program

PETERS, HENRY
Winnipeg MB artist Long time contributor to Transition

ROLLI
See AUTHORS.

SKELTON, JAMES
Saskatoon artist and poet. Member of Saskatoon's WFYL

AUTHORS

BETZ, LI
AB writer enjoys retirement, writing, and being published. Recently in *Pif*, *Switchback Journal*, *Spadina Literary Review*, and *Eunoia Review*. W: <lizbetz.blogspot.ca>.

BRUCE, TILLEN
Saskatoon author of *Horse Sense* (ThistleDown 1995) and two unpublished manuscripts (*The Care Giver* and *The Golden Dragon*). Previously published in TRANSITION.

ENNS, VICTOR
Well-known Winnipeg writer frequently published in TRANSITION. Currently enjoying a CCA grant. W: <victorenn9.com/>.

GARVIE, CAROL
CMHA supporter writes poetry and prose and practices healthy living. Survivor of postpartum psychosis and member Comox Valley Writers Society.

GARVIE, NEIL
Another CMHA supporter from Comox BC. Former school principal now writes for his therapy, to help others, and as an expression of hope for all.

GREGERSEN, LEIF
Edmonton "Viking" writes and publishes fiction and non-fiction about his life experience with mental illness. Very active in CMHA. W: <edmontonwriter.wordpress.com>.

HARDING-RUSSELL, GILLIAN
Prolific and much-awarded Regina poet with PhD on postmodern poetry. Author five chapbooks, four trade books. Editor (for *Event* and privately) and freelance reviewer.

LOHANS, ALISON
Regina author of *Timefall*; *Leaving Mr. Humphries*; *Don't Think Twice*; *Picturing Alyssa*; and other books for young people. W: <alisonlohans.wordpress.com>.

MCFARLANE, MELANIE
Moose Jaw author children's and YA fiction. Active in SWG and Saskatchewan Festival of Words. Poetry mentorship with Robert Currie via SAB grant. W: <www.melaniemcfarlane.com>.

MONOHAN, LYNDA
Prince Albert writing facilitator (workshops, groups, residencies), author (four books of poetry), co-author (*A Beautiful Stone: Poems* and *Ululations* 2019), and mental health advocate.

AUTHORS, cont'd

ROLLI
A regular contributor from Regina and a prolific writer/cartoonist, most recently of illustrated essays. <rollistuff.com/who>.

SCHESKE, MARILYN
Regina writer with bizarre historical connection to Editor. First publication in TRANSITION.

SCHMITT, JOHN
Long-time Eastend SK writer interested in Aboriginal history with a local flavour. Second publication in TRANSITION.

SCHOFIELD, DANIKA
Emerging writer and member of WFYL (Prince Albert) facilitated by Lynda Monahan. First publication in TRANSITION.

SKELTON, JAMES
Member of WFYL Group (Saskatoon) facilitated by Jeff Park. Regular contributor to WFYL PAGES in TRANSITION.

SOFIA, ELLA
Ontario-based, self-styled Habit Coach: "Use your mind to re-train your brain by harnessing the power of habit!" W: <retrainyourbrain.ca> (lively).

YUAN-INNES, MELISSA
Emergency physician and award-winning writer whose family on both sides has a history of schizophrenia. W: <melissayuaninnes.com> (informative).

WRITING FOR YOUR LIFE (WFYL)

Creator and Judge, Irene Grobowsky

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Facilitator: Ted Dyck
26 Glenna Gordon
26 Catlin McCullam-Arnal

PRINCE ALBERT

Facilitator: Lynda Monahan
26 Sherry Favreau
26 Ayami Greenwood
27 Wendel Guido

REGINA

Facilitator: Lyn Hynes
27 Jayne Melville Whyte

SASKATOON

Facilitator: Jeff Park
28 Stephen Dunster
28 Derek Sarazin

SASKATOON cont'd

29 James Skelton
29 James Snyder
29 Brenda Stretch
28 Samantha Hansen
28 Brian Priest

WEYBURN

Facilitator: Tasha Collins
30 Kevin Bellemare-Prokopetz
30 Debra Carlson
30 Nina Schad
30 Larry Lauder
31 Jennifer Morin
31 Garette Strongarm
31 Barry Styre
31 Eric Valentine



PRESENTATIONS and WORKSHOPS

Suicide

- 🌀 **Speaking of Suicide** - an introduction to the topic of suicide awareness
- 🌀 **safeTALK** - Suicide Alertness for Everyone
A half-day (3.5 hour) workshop
- 🌀 **ASIST** - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills - 2-day skills-building training to provide suicide first aid interventions
- 🌀 **Empowering Teens** to prevent suicide
- 🌀 **Tattered Teddies** - a workshop about suicide in children



What is a Recovery College?

A Recovery College is a place of self-discovery where people come together to gain knowledge, learn new skills, and explore new roles for themselves in a supportive environment. Here a “student” is not a passive recipient of information or advice; they are actively engaged, valued and empowered within a culture of mutual respect. A Recovery College is a learning environment where people with lived experience are equal partners in developing and delivering learning opportunities that open the door to new aspirations and personal growth. Recovery Colleges offer a new way to support recovery and can be transformative for both individuals and organizations. Within the Recovery College model, there is a focus on bringing together the expertise of both professionals and people with lived experience in a process of co-production, co-delivery and co-learning.

For a complete list of our training opportunities visit our website at
<https://sk.cmha.ca/programs-services/hope-learning-centre/>



**Canadian Mental
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For over 30 years the CMHA Cash Calendar has helped support CMHA's mental health programs in Saskatchewan.

The Cash Calendar has remained CMHA Sask. Division's primary fundraising tool for decades and we thank everyone who's supported this initiative over that time.

The Calendar is 100% a product of Saskatchewan, from the absolutely stunning artwork, the moving poetry, the design and printing, even the distribution, you can count on every element of this calendar supporting people and businesses of Saskatchewan. In fact, even our daily prizes are made

possible through the generous donations and support of Saskatchewan businesses. Perhaps most importantly, once purchased, funds from Cash Calendar sales go right back into providing mental health support and advocacy for people all across this province.

This year in particular, CMHA's fundraising efforts have been effected by COVID-19. We're making every effort to ensure our programs remain intact with uninterrupted services, and your purchase of a calendar goes a long way towards that goal. Visit our website for purchasing details, and to learn more about the programs your supporting!

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