
The Bibliophile
№5

THE 5 BIBLIOPHILE

News from the Bibliomanse

SOME FEATURES IN THIS ISSUE

A BIBLIOASIS CAROL

Have yourselves a meta little xmas.

EM ON THE PAST

2023 publicity began back in autumn of 2022, when I started working on our first book of the calendar year: *On Writing and Failure* by Stephen Marche, a short book on the history of writerly failure. Like writing, most of our publicity efforts are met with rejection. We send missives into the void, or as Marche puts it "throwing yourself at the door."

As I read Marche, I was a bit relieved. He wasn't expecting his tiny book to make headlines and he understood the media landscape. 2022 saw dozens of literary journals lose funding, book pages in newspapers continue to dwindle, and reviews increasingly become lists. Even though publicity is for optimists like me—fools who believe in and demand a thriving literary ecosystem—who send *poets* places to read *poems*, I couldn't help but enjoy the idea of a book that understood its likeliness to fail. I sent my void-aimed missives anyway.

On Writing and Failure was rave reviewed in the *New York Times, Vanity Fair, Washington Post*, NPR, *The New Statesman*, the *Globe and Mail, The Literary Review of Canada* and excerpted in *The Atlantic* and *Lit Hub*. Marche talked to every literary podcaster working today (or so it seemed in my inbox). We sold the UK rights to Sort of Books, who released it in early November. And this morning when I opened my laptop, London-based readers were twittering away on my feed about this book that changed the way they see their work.

Marche's book set the tone for 2023, a year of failing towards success. We shouted into the void, knocked on unknown doors, and hauled book-filled parcels across international borders. We rented out bars, sent invitations, and crossed our fingers. We mailed hundreds of books to critics and editors who probably wouldn't read our stuff anyway. Unless, maybe, they did.

Instructions for the Drowning by Steven Heighton was selected by *The New Yorker* as one of their best books of the year. A radical book of essays on bookselling, *The Art of Libromancy* by Josh Cook, was featured in *Esquire*. *1934* by Heidi LM Jacobs made the front page of the *Globe and Mail*. Jeannie Marshall recorded a CBC Ideas episode from inside the Sistine Chapel for *All Things Move*. Don Gillmor's *Breaking and Entering* received our first ever *Oprah* review. Casey Plett's *On Community* broke our website with pre-orders (that one is less of a surprise). Jason Guriel's sci-fi epic poem was reviewed in the *Wall Street Journal*. Two debuts, *Dreaming Home* and *Cocktail*, became unexpected bookseller favourites. *Sleep Is Now a Foreign Country* received the best review we've ever gotten in the *Toronto Star*. And we were in no shortage of Booker Prize nominations thanks to Elaine Feeney and Gauz's outstanding novels. (You'll find interviews with both authors in the pages that follow.) And more, so much more.

But perhaps our most notable 2023 publicity feat is the addition of Madeleine Maillet to our little team, whose fierce creativity feels impossible not to mention here, at the end of a year of incredible and unlikely publicity for our books.

VS ON THE PRESENT

If there is such a state of being as *the present* in a publishing house, it may well be located in the production office, site of sequential action and concrete result. Truly you can—and we might!—publicize a book until the end of time, but you only copyedit, typeset, and proof it once. Usually. Things get a little gremlins-after-midnight in the reprint department, especially with the way our publicity department keeps failing better and better. (A fact of the recent past that Emily didn't mention: after joining us in January 2022 as a publicity and marketing assistant, she's newly been named our Marketing &

Publicity Manager.) Currently: planning reprints ranging in quantity from a couple hundred to more than a couple of thousand.

Also, at present: off to print with winter and early spring books, among them Ivana Sajko's *Love Novel* and Jón Kalman Stefánsson's *Your Absence Is Darkness*, two books we've been going on about for months. Presently, we're not the only ones: you'll see some of the generous advance praise for these two translations on pages 52–53. And after what's felt like a comically epic editorial journey—fully appropriate for an epic comedy—printer proofs for Christophe Bernard's *The Hollow Beast*, magisterially translated from the French by Lazer Lederhendler, are on my desk right this second, just waiting on me to finish typing this sentence and a few others, after which I'll copyedit, typeset, and proof them . . . but there I go, into the future again.

At present: keeping an eye on the aftermath of a big November. In addition to Elaine Feeney's *How to Build a Boat*, November 2023 saw the publication of Ray Robertson's *All the Years Combine: The Grateful Dead in Fifty Shows*, Casey Plett's *On Community*, Mike Barnes's *Sleep Is Now a Foreign Country*, all three *Best Canadian* anthologies, and Mark Anthony Jarman's *Burn Man: Selected Stories*, all of which must now be kept readily available between our three warehouses in the lead-up to Christmas, and the news about which is currently making its way into the sixth iteration of *The Bibliophile*, which you will see in February and which I am also laying out right now.

At present: starting on the future. Somehow Emily and I are working on sales materials for the next Fall–Winter season—books we'll publish between September 2024 and March 2025—while another Emily and I are prepping catalogs for Spring 2024, and that's a whole new endeavour to fill you in on. I guess, in the end, I'm a terrible ghost of Biblioasis Present: I can't wait to tell you about what's coming. But at least for now, I'll leave that to a better mind.

DW ON THE FUTURE

Einstein may have proved time relative more than a century ago, but publishers have known it for far longer than that; every day is a constant shuttle of past, present and future. But in this brief window, finally off the road and able to relax a little after the fall crush, I'm focusing much more on the future here at the Bibliomanse, reading

incessantly to fill slots in 2024 and 2025, supporting future publicity efforts for key 2024 titles, editing books, like Russell Smith's long-awaited new novel *Self Care* (September 2024), and thinking constantly about the problems we're facing and what to do about them. The persistence of such problems is the one thing that cuts across past, present and future tenses: the problems of cash flow and coverage and discoverability and distribution, of figuring out better ways to work, on our own and with our bookselling and publishing compatriots, if only to make this perilous trade slightly less perilous.

How to make our titles more available, especially in Canada, a country in which its own publishers have less than 5 percent of market share, has been the problem plaguing me most in recent years. Nor is it getting better: though there are more Canadian titles in the market, a recent Booknet report shows that between 2017 and 2022 Canadian-authored sales decreased by 13 percent. There is no one that we've talked to—booksellers, other publishers, distributors, salespeople—who think that the current system is working, especially for smaller publishers; when a commissioned sales rep is responsible for thousands of titles a season, there's no way they can know more than a small percentage; and as more than one bookseller confirmed, this system can also interfere with speedier, more problem-oriented communications.

So, after years of thinking and kvetching, we have decided to bring Canadian sales fully in-house in 2024. We've hired an excellent Sales Director in Emily Bossé—in the process increasing the Emily quotient at the press by a third—and after her first weeks I am more certain than ever that she will make us stronger and better able to serve our authors, their books, and the booksellers who sell them. Our communication with the latter has since been among the best and most engaging in our history, and we're thankful for their openness and faith as we stumble forward into what we hope and expect will be a new and better year.

EMILY MERNIN, VANESSA STAUFFER, AND DAN WELLS
MONTREAL, QUEBEC, AND WINDSOR, ONTARIO
DECEMBER 5, 2023

AN INTERVIEW WITH GAUZ'

GAUZ' is an Ivoirian author, journalist and screenwriter. After studying biochemistry, he moved to Paris as an undocumented student, working as a security guard before returning to the Côte d'Ivoire. His debut novel, *Standing Heavy*, was shortlisted for the 2023 International Booker Prize.

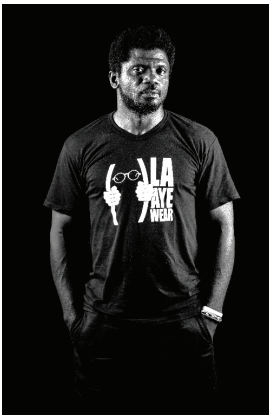
MADELEINE MAILLET is a writer, translator, and French Canadian. Her stories have been published here and there and anthologized in *The Journey Prize Stories* and *Best Canadian Stories.*

MADELEINE MAILLET: *Hello, Gauz'. I'd like to start by asking you to tell us a little about yourself.*

GAUZ': Gauz' is my pen name but it's also my tribal name. Gauz' is short for Gauzorro. My grandmother gave me the name and we have a special relationship. She's the one who got me into thinking about Africanness, thinking about the stories we tell and how we tell them, and thinking about my relationship with language and through language with the people around me. My government name is Armand Patrick Gbaka-Brédé. When I was twenty in university, I rebelled against my parents and the way they had easily adopted colonial names. That's when I decided to go by Gauzorro. But, the neighborhood and my friends, they shortened it to Gauz'.

MM: *I've read that you turned down a prestigious scholarship to pursue veterinary studies in France. Instead, you decided to travel around Côte d'Ivoire to get to know your country better, and that you consider this period to be "your first job as an observer of others." How important was this decision to your life as an artist?*

G: It changed everything. This question was fundamental to the person I would later become. I got this scholarship. But I didn't want to go to France to study veterinary science and then have a career that was all mapped out for me. It's very difficult to express this in a society like Côte D'Ivoire, where getting a scholarship to study in



L: *Gauz' (cr. The Booker Prizes);* R: *cover design by Nathan Burton.*

Europe is a great victory: a guarantee of your success and proof of your intelligence. I had all my papers in hand. The day before I left, I called my mother and said I have to talk to you. She understood me straight away. She said, "You don't want to leave." It was like a weight had been lifted. I decided to travel around Côte d'Ivoire to all the places I'd never been. I had my camera that my father gave me when I was twelve, and that's how I learned to observe people. Finally, five years later, after I'd traveled all over Côte d'Ivoire, I got serious about my studies again, and I eventually went to Paris to study biochemistry.

MM: *The reader of* Standing Heavy *quickly realizes that the security guard has a privileged view of our consumer society. You've done the security guard's job, so this is a literary creation that also touches on personal experience. What was the starting point for this novel?*

G: I'd worked as a security guard for six months as a student when I started grad school. After living in France for ten years, I said fuck it, this isn't where I want to live, things are happening back in Côte d'Ivoire. Before I had decided not to accept a scholarship and to stay in Côte d'Ivoire against all odds, and years later, when I made the decision to leave France to return to Côte d'Ivoire it was also against all odds. At the time, I decided that the surest way to earn money easily as a Black man was to work as a security guard again.

I called my friend Alain to ask if he had any work for me and he said, "Tomorrow, if you want." Alain arranges it. The first scene in *Standing*

Heavy where the Black men are climbing the stairs to the hiring office, one man to every step, that's what I saw when I got to the spot. It was so cinematic. Stranger than fiction. And I did the interview, exactly as it's written in the book. I found it so surreal and funny. I said to myself, I've got to write this down, one day I'm going to put it all in a film.

The next day, I went to my first gig as a security guard working for the fast fashion chain Camaïeu at their outlet in the Bastille. I'd been given the keys to open the store. It was the first day of their big sale, and I didn't even recognize the storefront because the sidewalk was so crowded. Even though I'm a big guy, when I opened the door, the women who were waiting trampled me to get inside. Every night when I got home I'd tell my friends what happened, and they'd say no way, that's crazy…I started taking notes like mad. This was a pivotal moment of my life. At that point, I had made the decision to leave France. When I left for Côte d'Ivoire after two months of working security, I brought with me the stacks of notes that I had written on garment tags or receipt paper.

MM: *The security guards are simultaneously placed in a position highly visible to the crowds that frequent the stores, and at the same time treated as if they were invisible. Did this paradoxical situation inspire your novel?*

G: I was able to look without being seen. I thought of it as a documentary set-up. I said to myself, this is perfect. Everyone's ignoring you. It's only if there's a problem that people know you're there. I could take notes all day and I did. I quickly realized the security guard's presence in any store is pointless. Even the greatest thief in the world, if he were to come into a store where they sell lipstick for ten euros or clothes for twenty euros, he'd have to steal tons of clothes to affect the store's bottom line. There's a creeping feeling that whatever purpose you're serving isn't the one you were given when you were hired.

The security guard's real work is theatrical. You're already Black in a white country. I think that even in the United States it's often minorities who do this job. You're there in the name of a caricature. Your role is scripted. You wear a costume. In a clothing store, security guards are dressed in a suit and tie. You're well dressed. You're neutral, a Black man in a black suit, black tie, black shoes. You feel

that you're in a play about consumer society. After a week, I understood what it was all about. I was not there to ensure anyone's security. I had no training and no legal right to apprehend anyone. I was paid a pittance, 1,500 euros a month. But I understand that even a great thief could never steal the value of my wages, because the store employed a number of security guards. So we cost our employers a lot of money, just to stand around uselessly…Finally, I realized, it's a bit like the bow on top of a gift. A security guard looks good. He says to passing customers, this thing we're selling is classy. The guards' presence flatters the customers' pride. They say to themselves, this store is paying four big Black guys to watch me buy something. It's crazy. That's when you realize that you're just another accessory. You're being paid to be a consumer accessory.

MM: Standing Heavy *is very funny, even if the situations the characters find themselves in, such as working until two in the morning, sleeping on the floor, dealing with a deliberately confusing immigration system and risking deportation, are hard things to survive. Why is humor important to you as a writer?*

G: Humor isn't just important, it's fundamental. Look, all over the planet, laughter is the thing that reminds us of our deepest humanity. There's no possible distinction between two humans who are laughing, none at all. And what's more, it's contagious: when you laugh, you infect someone who isn't laughing. You can spread laughter across the planet. My dream is to trigger simultaneous global laughter. Someone starts laughing in Grand Bassam and four hours later everyone starts laughing in Patagonia.

This goes back to my grandmother's storytelling and the other storytellers in our village. If you couldn't make people laugh, you were the sorriest storyteller ever. It wasn't enough just to scare people or to educate them. You had to be able to make people laugh too. Because someone who laughs is someone who has understood. Laughter is nature's surest way of expressing understanding. And nuanced understanding at that. Our ancestors understood that the essence of pedagogy, of passing on the baton, happens through laughter. It works here in Côte d'Ivoire, it works in Japan, it works with First

Nations people in the Americas. In the most ancient societies, the so-called primitive ones, which are the societies that have not lost touch with their foundations, you find that people laugh all the time.

My grandmother used to take me to meetings under the palaver tree, the most caricaturesque thing foreigners picture when they think of Africa, where people gather to share stories. The real legends were the guys who could work out the most complicated problems while making you laugh. That's how the brain works. There's a sentimental gear and a technical gear. The two are related in the ability to create understanding through empathy and mockery. You take a step back when you laugh at a situation. Slipping on a banana peel is the stupidest thing in the world. On the other hand, it still makes me laugh.

MM: *It also seems to me that the humor, the fact that the security guard understands the absurdity of his situation and the situation of our society, gives you a kind of distance …*

G: Laughter gives you perspective, and I had already taken a physical step back from French society. Not only had I moved back to Abidjan, which is a megalopolis like Paris, but I'd left the city for a dingy little motel in the Tchologo province. I had an intellectual distance from the material and I had my notes. When I started the novel, my intention was to write these anecdotes from my notes, but in a very Black way, following the negritude movement, you know like Senghor, Damas and Césaire. We grew up fascinated by these guys' big, beautiful, long sentences. Paradoxically, I don't like négritude, this insistence on identity. I don't think that I should have to explain myself, or who I am to anyone. I am who I am. If you say to me, "You're like this"; then I'll either agree or disagree. But, négritude tempted me because I can write beautiful sentences. I felt like I was Joseph Conrad or Louis Ferdinand Céline. On the third night, the motel security guard, who saw that I was locked in my room, said to me: "Mister, you're sitting there doing nothing but writing, come out, I'll have you over for dinner at my house."

At this security guard's place, I was chatting with everyone and I said to myself, my God, I'm totally stupid, who am I writing this book *for*? For people who talk like this? It's not Senghor's superflu-

ous style that I should be using. I need to find something simpler. When I got back to the hotel, I decided to write the anecdotes from my notes as simply as possible. I wrote twice as many of the short chapters as there are in the book, laughing all along. But when I read it, I said to myself, where are you going with this? You're here in Tchologo. Are you just going to write about the ridiculous goings on in white stores in Paris to make people laugh?

No, I thought, you're here now. And the fact of being in Côte d'Ivoire, it helped me remember that my father was a security guard in France, and that his cousin over there was a security guard, and that my mother's cousin was also a security guard in France. And I thought of all the Ivorian security guards who had been in France for years. When I thought about my father, I realized that he wasn't a security guard in the same way that I was. There's been a historical evolution in this trade related to the larger history of commerce. I decided to place the narrative of my experiences as a security guard in this wider context. So I wrote the story of immigration, of previous generations of security guards from the Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere, while thinking of my father and mother.

MM: *Time is at the heart of this novel and of the security guard's life, because he stands still all day long. He has to kill time. What inspired this approach?*

G: Everything in this book is a question of time. The contemporary narrative is chronological; I don't try to defy time with flashbacks. I always follow the arrow of time. In the contemporary sections at Sephora on the Champs Élysées, the chapters start in the morning and finish late at night, often when the store is empty, it's not closed until one or two o'clock in the morning, and there's a different relationship between the customers, there's even a different relationship between the customers and the security guards, an Arab princess who comes in at one-thirty in the morning, she has time to talk to you, the security guard. I remember the sex workers on the stroll always came in to touch up their make-up. I'm obsessed with time and that's how I devised the thing.

The structure of the novel, and of my other novels too, centers on time. The capital "S" story of history, and then the lowercase "s" story

BOOKSELLER BUZZ

"African immigrants in Paris find employment as security guards at ultra-bougie shops like Sephora where they are paid a pittance to watch humans do human things. Gauz' ingeniously structures several chapters as a flurry of single paragraph vignettes that remind me of an endless bank of closed circuit camera monitors where intimate and banal moments are captured alongside snide judgments. Gauz's writing is mordant and highly visual, you can easily see the dilapidated student housing juxtaposed against the glossy department stores. Explores the question: why colonize when late capitalism allows one to economically exploit foreign countries from home?"

Douglas Riggs, Bank Square Books (Mystic, CT)

"When not fearing eviction or avoiding relatives' demands to send money, three illegal immigrants from Côte d'Ivoire work as impeccable security guards in upscale women's stores on Paris's Champs-Élysées. The diversity of shoppers supplies nearly endless entertainment for the large, Black, acutely visible guards. They share hilarious, absurd, and stupid stories that keep them awake, amused, and standing tall for very long shifts.

Kay Wosewick, Boswell Book Company (Milwaukee, WI)

"Ah, Paris. Where lovers meet on the streets and sway to sweet music in the lounges. Where rich men run things and no-one pays attention to the Black men who stand around being guards of all things valuable. This is a story about three of those men, illegal immigrants, and the world that has made them all but invisible, yet given them a wide-window of opportunity to follow the action and collect information about those same rich men. This is satire at its best. Shortlisted for the Booker Prize, this translation by Frank Wynne does justice to the work of Gauz', the author. What an artistic find!"

Linda Bond, Auntie's Bookstore (Spokane, WA)

of the day-to-day, the jokes and anecdotes that are told and retold. The main story, that follows three generations of security guards, is necessarily accelerated, but even in the contemporary chapters that are written more anecdotally, the reader has to feel that things are moving, and the lowercase story has to be firmly anchored in the larger narrative of history—it's pretty complicated, really.

MM: *What are you reading now?*

G: American professor Marcus Rediker's *A Slave Ship*, it's genius, this telling of the human tragedy that was the slave trade. A people who resisted mightily, to the point of becoming the standard bearers of culture across the globe. He insists too much on the work of abolitionists, like all white scholars. The project of slavery was always untenable, you can shackle the body but as long as you can dream, sing, dance, and tell stories, you can be someone's property but you are not their slave.

I'm also reading the Phillipe Bordas' *L'invention de l'écriture* (The Invention of Writing). The story of the Ivorian artist, Bruly Bouabré, who was featured in a MOMA retrospective last year, but whose work as a contemporary artist pales in comparison to his larger body of work. He invented an alphabet, an African alphabet, we are of the same ethnicity he and I, we are Bété. His fascination with occidental writing inspired him to invent this alphabet, because he found the latin alphabet too impoverished to express and document his, and by extension our thoughts as Ivorians and Africans. Bouabré was never recognized for his alphabet but for his drawings, commodification distorts everything, this man was engaged in the most supreme form of poetry, he was not content to play with language, he invented one, but he was recognized instead for his drawings because those can be bought and sold. No one has ever invented an alphabet. It's incredible. Bordas understands that Bouabré's reputation as a visual artist and not a thinker and poet is a tragic misapprehension. It's as if Victor Hugo were known for his drawings and not *Les Misérables.*

AN INTERVIEW WITH ELAINE FEENEY

ELAINE FEENEY is a writer from the west of Ireland. Her sophomore novel, *How to Build a Boat*, was longlisted for the 2023 Booker Prize.

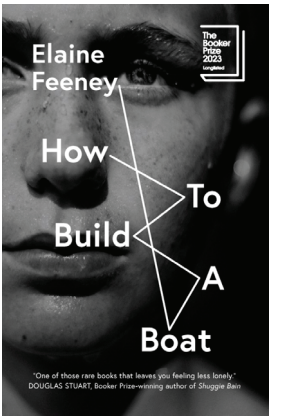
EMILY MERNIN lives in Montreal.

EMILY MERNIN: *Tell me a little bit about yourself.*

ELAINE FEENEY: I am a teacher and a writer from the west of Ireland. I was born in Galway, and I grew up here. It's a really special place for me to write in. I think there is a really strong energy. I live near the coast, near the Atlantic ocean. I grew up on a small farm on the road I live on now. I am drawn to the countryside, and to nature and agriculture. I am one of those annoying introverted-extroverted type people. I need to spend a lot of time in the countryside away from people and cities. I lecture in the University of Galway, where I teach creative writing and poetry. I started out my career as a slam poet, way back in the noughties. It led on to becoming a page poet as well. I studied English literature in college. After the page poetry, I had an idea for a novel, *As You Were*. It took me five years to write. I've just delved into the world of fiction ever since. I also write drama. I still write poetry, and I have a new collection of poetry forthcoming next spring. That's me in a nutshell.

EM: How to Build a Boat *is your second novel. I'd love to hear you talk about your writing process, and how you think the publication process of your first novel,* As You Were, *but also your work as a poet, influenced the shape of this one.*

EF: *How to Build a Boat* is a big departure from my poetry and *As You Were*. *As You Were* was between these two big referendums: marriage equality and the repeal of the eighth amendment to allow for abortion access and healthcare for women. That was a really crazy and frenetic time in Ireland. I can't explain how claustrophobic and full of fear we were as a group. When I started out in my poetry, I wanted



L: *Elaine Feeney (cr. Julia Monard);* R: *cover design by Zoe Norvell.*

to be a political poet. I was influenced by the beats in some ways with regards to style but also because I was pushing back against the ideal of the Irish lyric poem. I really wanted to change the tradition. There was a group of us who wanted to be political and see good poetry change things. So we started this idea of trying to discuss Ireland in new ways with new language and a new energy.

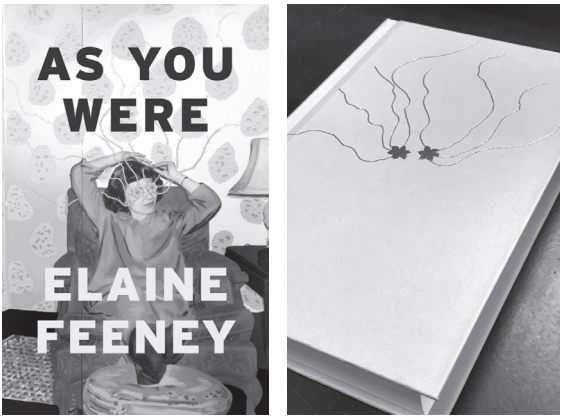
And then women's healthcare started to come on the agenda and marriage equality. Ireland is traditionally culturally quite conservative. It's very much a theocracy, the church and state are intertwined in all institutions, and this is important with my work. *As You Were* is about a hospital. There is an oppressive school at the center of *How to Build a Boat.* With *As You Were*, I was listening to the radio a lot and people would share their secrets, their shames, and the most brutal stories about what happened to them under the institution of the church. I was in an angry place, and I think that's obvious in the prose of *As You Were.* But I allowed myself into that space, and I really drew on my slam idea and maybe on the Modernist tradition of writing as well and so it was a very auditory cave-like space for me, and that's what I wanted to delve into.
I had been writing the two novels simultaneously, and had given my energy over to *As You Were.* I knew *How to Build a Boat* was a kernel of an idea that I'd had for a long time. So I suppose in some ways, both novels came from the same genesis. I had a brain clot with my second son. I was hospitalized for a very long time. It was really touch and go. I faced my own mortality, and all that, you

know, the things that terrify writers. Well, terrify everyone, but writers tend to dwell in that space. I suppose I took *As You Were* from that experience.

When my second son was about to start secondary school, I got this idea, and imagined if he had gone to a secondary school like my husband had been in. One of these very oppressive Catholic schools. I taught in one for two decades, in a Catholic school, because they are very common and that's the type of school a lot of people end up teaching in. I thought to myself: what would happen if our son was sent to a school like the school I've created in *How to Build a Boat*? The ideas for the novels start from similar start points—me thinking about myself, haha, which sounds very narcissistic—but moving to thinking about who I am, or who is anyone, in an institution? And what does the hierarchy do to a person? There are the rules that we are all bound by, the rules of the country, but then the cultural norms are a completely different thing under the guise of education or the guise of healthcare.

So that's where the novel idea came for *How to Build a Boat.* I had the boy and he needed to build a boat but I did not know why. For years, I was figuring out why he had to build the boat. I had to dismantle the book a few times to go back and figure it out. It came to me that his mother died, and that's very obvious from the first two or three pages. I killed the cat quickly there. He needed to build the boat because he wanted to recreate her energy. But definitely a different writing process, a very inward focused, very visual, quiet process. The house was quiet. It was much slower. I took my time with it, and I feel it's gentler.

EM: *You answered quite a bit of my second question, which is about institutions.* How to Build a Boat *is set at a Catholic boys school in Ireland, and explores some of the issues with the insularity and misogyny of these institutions.* As You Were, *which is very different in spirit and content, is set in a hospital. In both novels, characters form communities that work both with and against an institution—in a kind of fricative, productive way. I'd love to hear you talk a bit more about the role institutions play in your work.*



L: As You Were *trade paperback (design by Zoe Norvell, featuring art by Daisy Patton);* R: As You Were *limited edition hardcover (design by Natalie Olsen).*

EF: No no, it's really important to me. I am fascinated by them. Since I was a young child, I never felt like I fit in at school. I always felt like I was on the outside. I had this world I was experiencing on one level. But I also had a lens I was observing it through. I started writing when I was very young. In a way, I think, to control a world I couldn't control. I am interested in the institution of the family, and who gets to dominate that. And then I see a school as a broader institution as well. And then obviously a hospital as the ultimate institutional space. You go in and time stands still. It's completely outside of the world. You become institutionalized very quickly in a hospital. It's less about the institution, particularly in *As You Were*, it was more the idea of Plato's Cave, or *Hamlet.* Putting somebody into a staged situation, so that there is a chorus, and they bounce off each other. They could be anywhere, just a warehouse, where people that ordinarily don't hangout are pushed together in a tight space.

Schools are the same: for five years, or eight years, you are stuck in this room, with these people, who you would ordinarily not choose to be with. There are a lot of positives and negatives. It makes you understand how you get on with people on a human level. But also, what I noticed, around the age of twelve or thirteen, people started to develop personas. I was like, oh my god, I don't want to say faking it, but teenagers start to learn what they need to do to fit in. I never did. With *How to Build a Boat*, the central

In October, with the assistance of Culture Ireland. we had the terrific pleasure of bringing Elaine to events across Canada—including at our own bookshop.

TOP: *Elaine signs books (and cracks us up) in our Windsor office.*

MIDDLE: *In conversation with your humble typesetter at Biblioasis Bookshop.*

BOTTOM: *Jessica Westhead, Dan, Elaine, and Type Books co-owner Joanne Saul in Toronto.*

character Jamie, because he is neurodiverse—but not just for that reason, he's just a singular guy—he's not going to do that. He is not going to bend to what the institution wants him to do. I often think of this book like a glass lake with currents underneath it: you can enter this novel at a very simplistic level, which is what I wanted, you can go along with the story, but then there's layers of undercurrents. He's defiant in his own way. Tadhg is defiant in his own way. Tess is ready to restart and there's a lot of grit to that. But also the idea of building the currach, it became, in retrospect, as much about making something beautiful in a really oppressive dark space. It's like the opposite of the Trojan horse. They're making it on the inside, and they need to get it out, and free it. They are building something beautiful inside the institution.

EM: *I think that is the thing that is interesting about your settings. These communities are benefiting in many ways from an institution. But they are also resisting it, and, as they do, are setting new norms.*

EF: The accepted norms are so disturbing in so many ways. Especially what we don't see, and what we don't question. I am fascinated by the whole education system. I taught *The Handmaid's Tale*. I had parents asking me, "Was that wise?" It was on the curriculum. I had more questions about that than I have ever had about anything else, like what's the core value of this school? Do you teach evolution? You know, I was never asked those questions. But when I taught *The Handmaid's Tale*, it became a thing. I am really fascinated by how people can go along with some things and then question other things. I don't mind questioning at all but: question everything. Question where your child is spending their whole day, and what is the ethos of the school, and what is the moral structure. Jamie is the person who comes into the space in *How to Build a Boat* and asks all the questions.

EM: *The image of the glass lake, with currents beneath it, is so nice. Because there is so much that is unresolved, in a good way, about who these characters are as people. Jamie has his difficulties, and is resistant, and that doesn't come to a point and isn't tied up neatly.*

EF: I can't allow anything in my work to ever come to a point. I'm very socratic about the whole *all I know is I know nothing*. As I've gotten older, I realize that we're just learning from each other and getting on with the getting on. We live and work in these spaces with other people but we really don't know their private lives. And I think that's very apparent in the novel. At its core it is a novel about loneliness and isolation even amongst people. It asks: can we ever truly know each other? And do we want to? I feel like I've always been a very lonely person, if that makes sense. Loneliness is something we don't talk about as much as we should. We all feel this feeling for different reasons. Obviously these characters feel lonely because they are in grief. Hugely. Jamie to a lesser extent. He knows there is an energy missing, which I find fascinating. I am really interested in literature and writing about miscommunication. Where people constantly try to communicate, but they just miss. All of my characters never say what they mean to say.

EM: *My next question is about grief, and I think so much miscommunication comes from grief, when you are unable to reconcile what you are feeling with what's in front of you. I think about* How to Build a Boat *as a book about aftermath. Even though it is set in the beginning of a school year, everything that has defined these characters has already happened. I find literature to be a uniquely rich space to explore intergenerational trauma and loss. I'd love to hear you talk a bit about grief, and how it shapes your character's development.*

EF: That is really insightful. Brilliant. You are so right, exactly that, with the aftermath. I am very interested in intergenerational trauma, personally, with my own family structures. My mom came from a big family of eleven, there were untold traumas that are now, later in life, coming out of women who never had a voice. Going back again to the referendums and the political change in Ireland happening so fast. A decade from so much silence and solitude, and then it all comes out, and these women have so much skin in the game. But what do you do with your pain? You've shared, and now what do you do?

I am on the west coast of Ireland where there are a lot of Gaeltacht pockets, Irish speaking. It's a part of Ireland that suffered

greatly from poverty and agrarian disadvantage because of the type of land. Its postcolonial with regards to it not being settled in the same way that the rest of the country was. I would've had grandparents and great-grandparents who spoke Irish, but then they stopped, and we weren't brought up with it because it was considered a language that could hinder success.

At its core it is a novel about loneliness and isolation even amongst people. It asks: can we ever truly know each other? And do we want to?

I feel like I am writing in this hybrid Hiberno-English—staccato fragmented bursts of language. There is a Beckett kind of vibe to it, and also a mad person vibe to it. So that's what happens when my characters meet and try to discuss the pain that they haven't put language to themselves. That's what I feel when, after all of this progress, I have conversations with people. They are often drink-fuelled, and often, our pain comes out in these utterances and stutters that aren't fluid. I'm anti the traditional novel in its sense of a linear narrative, with a start, an end, a third person narrator, and everything coming to a resolution. They don't come to a resolution. I think they are really juggling pain, intergenerational trauma, loss, and poverty as well.

I didn't grow up in an urban setting, and where I live wasn't industrialized for a long time. People lived in pockets of the countryside and then came into these towns and settled. They have quite a rural edge to them. All of the characters are coming together with some sense of shame. I think it all comes back to shame. They are ashamed of who they are or who they aren't. Tadhg is definitely born from his own shame. Tess has a good sense of who she is but there is a shame there with her difficult upbringing. Tadhg and Tess are not able to discuss anything. The miscommunication is mad between the two of them. Try as I might as an author, I could not get them to have a fluid conversation until the very end. In a way, Jamie stands out. Jamie is actually not suffering from shame. He doesn't know that he's living in council estate and it doesn't matter to him. He's just observant. He's one of the freest characters

in the whole novel, which I love. He's juxtaposed to shame. He's not inclined to worry about what people think about him, which is very freeing.

EM: *Yes, he is in the present. Even though he's thinking obsessively about his dead mother, but even she exists in the present for him.*

EF: Yes, she is alive for him, in a way. Loss is so different for him. And it has really fascinated me. Of course, he never knew his mother. He just wants this energy. He sees her as a swimmer in a video, of course he likens it to a kinetic energy. People have misinterpreted this book, someone said that he's a math savant. He's not a savant at all! He's interested in Maryam Mirzakhani because she's this lovely woman that makes him feel settled as she works out her geodesics on the board. She had a very tragic end too, so he likens her to a mother figure, but he's not close to any of the math. He has a lot of different interest areas—color, art—the world is one big opportunity for Jamie. He doesn't know how to put it all together to fill the void. It's not a void that is persecuting him but he knows he wants to find tools to recreate his mother's energy.

EM: *As I read, I was intrigued by the narration style, which moves between a very close third person, often shifting perspectives, and, a few times, dips into first person. It reminds me of some of Virginia Woolf's fiction who, though the main character is clear, rarely stays in one character's mind for too long. Can you talk about your narrator? And perhaps your literary influences more broadly?*

EF: That is so nice. Yes, definitely Woolf, with regards to the feel-free-to-hop-around narrator. The third person, it's very close. It shifts even in paragraphs. Obviously the opening is Jamie's spurts. It took me so long to get this voice, and I am naturally very much at home in a first person narrator, as you can probably see. But I did not think it was respectful in any way if I did a full first person Jamie. I was very conscious that that's not my experience. He closely follows my son, in his rhythms and cadences of speech, and also a lot of his areas of interest. With regards to the narrator,

it was very difficult for me because I didn't want to set up again in a Steinbeck way, even though I am interested in parts of Steinbeck. I like the way he does the large aesthetic and then follows the characters closely and then goes back to the aesthetic landscape. When I tried that, it just felt fake, like an affectation of an Englishness that didn't feel true to me. When I write short stories, I do actually have a real formal approach to the short story, and that's where I don't mind putting on that affectation. I play around with it and experiment. But for me to live with a novel for five years, it has to somewhat reflect my brain process. So, after a long time searching, I had the characters and I had loads of fragments. I went for a walk in the woods with a friend one day, my friend was talking to me, and she kept saying "she said." I came home, sat at the laptop and realized: "Jamie said." It's not first person but a very close third. It's very much like being the ghost of someone. It's quite tactile for me, that process. I could see Jamie coming from the bedroom. It overlaps with Tess, who is getting up at the same time. They both needed to start the day with the same level of anxiety but with very different moods and voices. When a character is doing something, I am closeby, like a ghost or a little shadow. It was very much that I was walking beside them. I can really feel and see this town. I drew it a lot. And I drew the currach a lot.

I've gone off again. My influences: I love Claire-Louise Bennett. She'd be less of an influence, because we've different voices, but I really admire her. I am influenced by Mike McCormack, he has a novel called *Solar Bones* and *Notes from a Coma*, and I play with punctuation. I love Mary Gaitskill and Tobias Wolff.

EM: *Mary Gaitskill. Wow. I didn't think of her as I was reading your book, but I can see that.*

EF: Someone said to me that the three main characters of *How to Build a Boat* are neurodiverse. And I was like: Are they? That's just the way I think. Now I'm in my third novel, and I am realizing, this is just me. I think Gaitskill has a sort of distance, an ordered, objective voice that I'm not sure I have. But I love that voice.

EM: *She has a way of writing about characters who are so subjective and strange, as though they are doing something really normal. Her reader has to really pay attention, which I see in* How to Build a Boat.

EF: Exactly. That's the human condition. It's the way I see people. I just read Percival Everett's *The Trees.* Have you read it? I will not say I am influenced by him, but I absolutely want to be. It's so political, a really powerful novel. Tove Ditlevsen's *The Copenhagen Trilogy* too. It's such an arrogant thing to say, but I am influenced by Joyce, and the Modernists, and the idea that you can do fragments, dialect, lean it to phonetic spellings. It's very risky now, and it takes a lot of time and work.

I am influenced by art, and country music—cringe! Country music is synonymous with Ireland. I grew up listening to John Prine, Tammy Renett, Josh Ritter, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, that kind of music definitely influences my work. There is a scene in the forest with Tadhg and Tess where I just felt like John Prine was singing the whole time. Francis Bacon's work was quite influential as well. Edna O'Brien would be another big influence when I was growing up—the idea that she was writing rural Ireland, which she did with such great ambition. There is a link between our rural upbringings.

I love Lucia Berlin. How brave is she? She's herself in so many of these stories, just different versions. They're so visceral, so aesthetic, so painful, and well observed.

EM: *Lastly, what are you reading now?*

EF: I've been reading a book of short stories by an Irish writer, Frank O'Connor. My agent also gave me a Tolstoy biography as a present, and I feel like it's homework now. I'm between those. I've started reading the poetry of Ishion Hutchinson, *House of Lords and Commons.* I adore them, they're so good. I'm blown away by it. I felt with poetry, there was no political space for me. I've gone deeply personal in the prose. I pick these up and I'm like—oh he's political and personal at the same time, and he's brilliant.

ON GIVING UP WRITING AT TWENTY-TWO

by Lisa Alward

IN THE SPRING OF 1980, my grade 12 English teacher, knowing how much I wanted to write, connected me with a university student who had won a national story contest in her teens and was now pursuing a graduate degree in English. Everything about this young woman awed me: not just her prize-winning story but her plant-filled apartment across from the Halifax Commons and especially her live-in boyfriend, who opened the door in a threadbare housecoat. She made us instant coffee and we talked for hours about a story I'd taped to her mailbox.

Although I never saw her again, I would always remember her generosity, and also a piece of advice she shared—or more a warning. Studying English, she said, could kill me as a writer. It had done this to her: she'd stopped completely. By the end of my BA four years later, I'd stopped writing too, but I didn't blame my English courses. Instead, for almost three decades, I accepted what felt so painfully obvious to me at 22—that I simply wasn't cut out to be a writer. That I lacked the grit needed to even try. Since returning to writing in my fifties, though, I've begun to wonder if my experience of studying English in the early eighties *did* kill something in me.

L: *Lisa signs a book for a fan at her Fredericton launch.* R: *Cover design by Ingrid Paulson.*

When I began my degree in 1980, feminism was largely viewed, at least by the media, as having triumphed, yet there wasn't a single female author in my first-year Introduction to English Literature. Or in my section of Renaissance Drama or The Romantics or any of the required courses for my English specialist apart from Victorian Lit. I'd grown up on books by Montgomery, Alcott, du Maurier, de la Roche, Atwood and Munro. Now I was learning these writers didn't count. They were merely children's authors. Popular authors. Canadian authors. I remember a conversation at a house party with another aspiring writer in my year. He had the slight stoop and pointy beard of a young Joyce. I wanted to write too, I told him, and he demurred. "Well, there aren't many important women writers."

And the only rebuttal I could think of was the Brontës.

In fourth year, my confidence already flagging, I applied to a creative writing workshop. Most of my portfolio dated from high school. (The only story I'd submitted to my college literary journal was mistaken for a narrative poem and typeset accordingly.) The professor let me in but questioned whether I had the stamina. And, indeed, I didn't write much in that class. None of the women seemed to. What *did* we do? Talked about the guys' writing (of which there was a never-ending supply). Apologized occasionally for the infrequency of our own submissions, our lack of stamina.

A woman writer needs a room of her own, Virginia Woolf argues in her famous essay. She also needs to feel she has a right to use it. That student I talked to at the house party? HarperCollins just released his twelfth book. And the young woman from Halifax? I can't know if she experienced a similar erosion of confidence to my own, but if I could go back in time, I'd advise her not to let the bastards grind her down.

Only it turns out I don't have to. I've Googled and she's writing too.

BOOKSELLER BUZZ

"It had been a while since I'd taken up a book of stories when recently, after the mood struck for the short form, I found an excellent debut collection by a Canadian writer, Lisa Alward. Her stories in *Cocktail* (Biblioasis) remind me of one of my favorite writers, Joan Silber, with their poignant, beautifully observed mini-character studies: folks negotiating the stepping-stones in life, the odd moments that reverberate across the years, the singular event that charts a new course. This is a winner, and I look forward to more from Alward."

Toby Cox, Three Lives & Co (New York, NY)

"Alward looks deep into the soul of each character in this debut collection of stories and finds desire, despair, fear, and yearning. From the eyes of a young girl witnessing the foibles of the adult world at her parents' cocktail party to a new mother seeking validation from a hired house painter to the competitiveness of mothers in a playgroup, each story blossoms into a compassionate examination of the pain of owning an inner life. Alward's close attention to detail—a color, a flower, the ice in a cocktail glass—adds delicate shade to this intensely intimate collection."

Grace Harper, Mac's Backs Books (Cleveland, OH)

"A stunning collection of stories that sheds light on the turning points only seen in hindsight. The way in which [Alward's] characters are thoughtfully crafted and fully formed makes this author on to watch for."

Shannon Alden, Literati Books (Ann Arbor, MI)

PORTRAIT OF A PUBLISHING ASSISTANT

EMILY STEPHENSON-BOWES is a publishing assistant at Biblioasis. She is a good dancer who loves her cats. Though Emily has objectively horrible taste in music, she's a pretty good person.

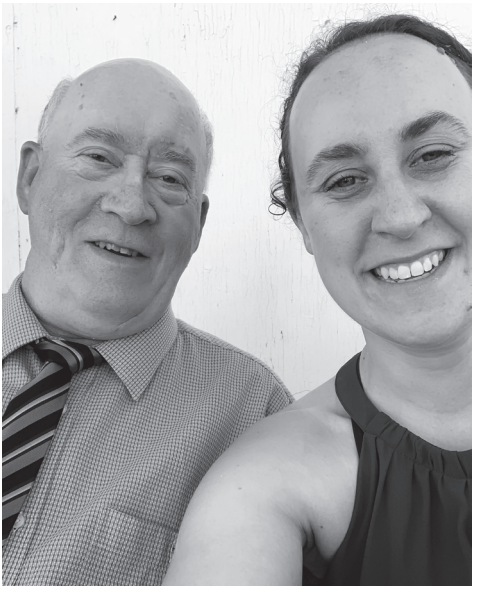
ASHLEY VAN ELSWYK is a queer writer of fiction and poetry, and editorial assistant at Biblioasis. Her work appears in publications including *Plenitude*, *Not Deer Magazine*, and various anthologies.

ASHLEY VAN ELSWYK: *I think it's fair to say that Biblioasis is made up of quite a few people who have travelled into this job unexpectedly, and from what I remember, you've got a background in a myriad of different areas. So, how did you end up in publishing?*

EMILY STEPHENSON-BOWES: I guess I ended up in publishing because of Covid. I have a biology degree and a master's in religious studies, but during Covid I was at home working at my mom's restaurant in Perth. I've always liked reading and I thought, hey, I'd like to know more about the industry, so I started taking publishing courses online at Toronto Metropolitan University. While I was in the program, I applied to Biblioasis as a Publicity and Marketing Assistant. I did not get the job, but they let me keep hanging around and I've been here ever since.

AVE: *That does tend to happen around here! So, you've gone from a publicity hopeful to a publishing assistant. What's that been like for you? Has there been anything that surprised you about working at Biblioasis, or in publishing in general?*

ESB: It's actually worked out well! To be honest, when I applied for the gig of publicist, I didn't necessarily want to work in publicity, I just wanted to work here. The job title, "publishing assistant," might sound a little vague, but it's really the perfect description of my job because I do a little bit of everything—social media, graphic design, writing notes (sorry to everyone for my horrid penmanship), and a whole lot of mailing! Actually, that's the

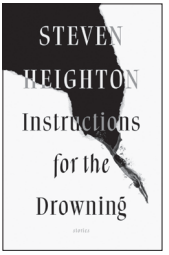


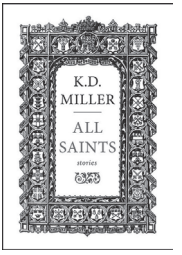
Emily Stephenson-Bowes, publishing assistant and general operations wizard, social media slayer, comp copies record-keeper, scooter influencer (DM for collabs), and patron saint of patience, good humour, and snacks. (Pictured with her dad, and Biblioasis superfan, Alfred.)

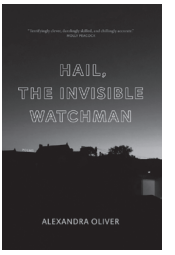
biggest surprise about working at Biblioasis: the volume of books that need mailing!

AVE: *I imagine working around so many books all day has left some sort of effect on you; how has your approach to reading changed, if at all? Is there anything that you've been drawn to more—or less!—since working here?*

ESB: It absolutely has, I've read so many books working here that I wouldn't usually pick up in a store or a library. I've come to love short stories, thanks to collections like K.D. Miller's *All Saints* and Steven Heighton's *Instructions for the Drowning*. I've also found a new appreciation for poetry. I'm still a poetry newbie, but after I heard Alexandra Oliver read from *Hail, the Invisible Watchman* at her book launch, I thought, "you know what? I could really get into this."







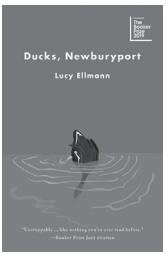
L TO R: *Cover designs by Ingrid Paulson, Kate Hargreaves, and VS.*

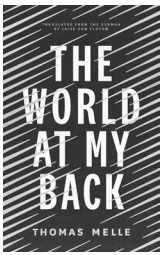
AVE: *I completely agree with you about the poetry—I didn't really get into it until I started working here as well. Speaks to the talent of our poets! But stepping away from launches and the joys of note writing, why don't you tell us a bit about life for you outside of Biblioasis?*

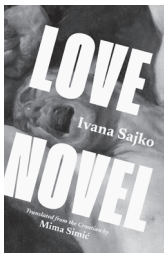
ESB: My life . . . okay. I moved to Windsor about two years ago, and have recently bought a house with my girlfriend, Molly, and our two cats (though the cats have yet to contribute financially). I'm an only child, and my parents are my best buds, so living this far from them has been difficult, but I've come to love Windsor, and am particularly fond of their pizza. Outside of Biblioasis, I spend my time baking, and watching baking videos (shout out to my baking crush Claire Saffitz), reading (often with a beer close by), listening to Broadway tunes, making typos, and spending time with the people I love.

AVE: *Now for the question we've all been waiting for: Desert Island Books, Biblioasis edition! What are you bringing?*

ESB: Backlist: *Ducks.* I haven't read it yet (I know!!!), it's chunky, and I love Lucy Ellmann. Frontlist: *The World at My Back.* This one just hits so close to home. Trust me, you should read it. Forthcoming: *Love Novel.* It's short, it's spicy, and I would probably have fun acting it out like a play…alone on my desert island.





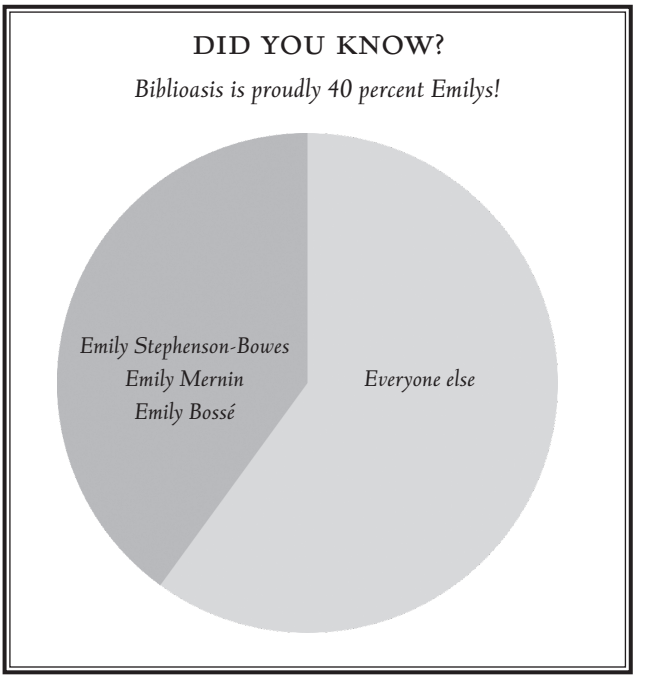


L TO R: *Cover designs by Zoe Norvell, Natalie Olsen, and Jason Arias.*

AVE: *And finally, not to put any pressure on you or anything, but do you have any advice for those looking to enter the publishing world? Anything you wish you'd known before, that you'd like to impart to others?*

ESB: I'm not sure that I'm the right person to ask for advice because I'm not sure that I'm best suited for the world of publishing—I

cannot spell to save my life, I have a very loose grasp of grammar, and I do not aspire to have a writing career. Hopefully, this won't get me fired . . . and I promise you Dan that this is not my resignation letter . . . but I don't know that I will continue to work in publishing for the rest of my career, and I think that's okay. I love so much about this job. I love the people who I work with, I love the authors (I don't have a favourite, but if I did, it would be Emily Urquhart), and I love being a very small part of turning a manuscript into a book. I'm not going anywhere anytime soon, but when I do, I know that I'll be a better employee and a better person for working at Biblioasis. So my advice is to give 'er a go! You might just end up chatting with Margaret Atwood on a random Tuesday afternoon in Windsor, Ontario!



from THE FUTURE

by Catherine Leroux (Trans. Susan Ouriou)

WHEN SHE WAS TWO, Judith began to eat dirt.

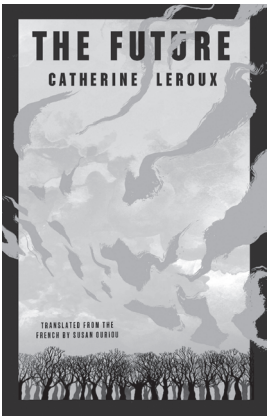
This was well after the stage when babies tend to discover the world through their mouths, lovingly coating everything they touch in a film of saliva. At two, Judith already knew how to walk and could pronounce more or less distinctly a few dozen words. One of them was "dir."

The minute she was set outside, she'd trot toward the flowerbeds, singing to herself. Her chestnut locks bounced with each step, her hand-sewn dress waltzed round her plump calves. Then she'd plunge her hand into the earth and shove a big fistful of humus into her mouth. Rushing over, it would already be too late for Gloria to intervene.

Gloria monitored her closely. Their outings to the backyard resembled a strange shadow game. The second the small shadow bent over, the tall shadow with the same curly locks, the same long dress, followed suit. If one put a hand on the ground, the other did likewise to stop her.

But Judith was inventive, and it didn't take long before she discovered the potted plants inside. The minute her mother turned her back, she'd feast on the dry earth of the cacti and the root-veined dirt of the spider plants. She even stole spoons from the kitchen to better stuff herself. Gloria would find her hiding behind armchairs, her face smeared with mud, neither joyful nor guilty, just content, her strange hunger sated. It went on till Gloria no longer knew whether to laugh or to scold. She decided to ignore her. What would have happened had she insisted on keeping her daughter from eating dirt? Would Judith have better understood the limits to her desires? Gloria ponders the question under the harsh neon lights of Station 38.

After an endless wait, a drawn-looking sergeant comes over to greet her. Straight off, he announces there are no new leads in the investigation into her daughter's murder. He pronounces the word *investigation* hesitantly, as though the term doesn't exactly fit the work the police carried out after Judith's death.



L: *Catherine Leroux (cr. Audrée Wilhemy);* R: *cover design by Natalie Olsen.*

"I'm here about my granddaughters," replies Gloria. "I want to know where the investigation is at into their disappearance."

The sergeant looks at her for a moment, of two minds. Then he leaves the room and returns with two skinny folders that he lays down silently. "No new leads there either."

"Could I see the files?"

"They're confidential."

Gloria would stake her life on the sergeant having brought out two empty file folders, just to make himself look good, and on no investigation having ever been launched into the girls' disappearance. And on the fact that they've either been forgotten, like Solomon's little gatherers, or simply ignored.

"They've been missing since the day their mother died," she nevertheless insists. "No one I've talked to has seen them. Can you really not tell me anything?"

The officer picks up the thicker file on Gloria's daughter and studies it more closely. Then his index finger drops onto the blue ink of a sentence.

"One thing. They're the ones who called for help. That means they were the first on the crime scene."

Gloria opens her mouth. She has to remember to breathe.

"When the officers arrived, the house was empty. Except, of course, for the victim."

Tears streak Gloria's cheeks. The mention of her granddaughters, alive and devastated, is shattering.

"If you like, you could try to track down the recording of their call. The emergency call centre is located at this address."

Gloria takes the card he holds out, as agitated as she is incredulous at such negligence. As though reading her thoughts, the sergeant resumes. "Listen, send me a picture, I'll circulate it among our fellows on the beat."

Gloria gives a curt nod and gets to her feet. She knows now that she will not be sending this man a picture and will never expect anything more from this place. On her way out, she finds herself face to face with a raven carrying something resembling a smooth stone in its beak. At the sight of her, it throws its head back, swallows, and flies off. Gloria could swear it has just ingested the philosopher's stone. She imagines tracking down the bird and killing it. She'd slit open its belly and clutch the warm stone in her hand. Then time would fold back in on itself, and the stone would return the missing to life.

AT SEVEN, JUDITH RAN away from home for the first time. Her father had punished her for breaking a china cup he'd inherited, one she'd been explicitly told not to play with. Banished to her room, she escaped through the window. She made it to the ground thanks to the Virginia creeper that covered the front of the house. She ran to the road unseen by Gloria, busy sewing in the kitchen. Her absence lasted for over an hour and a half. Hearing nothing, Gloria assumed that her daughter had cried herself to sleep. She imagined wiping the damp strands of hair from her child's cheeks with a washcloth. She would offer to glue the pieces of the cup back together for Judith. Her husband had decreed it a waste of time, but Gloria was determined to try. With her daughter. Watch her small hands wield the glue and the china and reach out for help. Gloria would show her how it could be done, and together they would erase the accident.

Mid-afternoon, a farmer who lived three kilometres away brought home a tearful, red-faced Judith. He had found her on the road, singing at the top of her lungs, bent on making it as far as the village. What she meant to do once she got there remained vague. Gloria dragged her dehydrated daughter into the kitchen.

Without a word, she gave her something to drink, then she wet a cloth and wiped her face clean of dust and tears. Erasing her bid to escape.

When he got home, her husband tore the creeper off the house.

"Good idea," Gloria said by way of thanks. "This way she won't be able to run off anymore."

Her husband shrugged. "Not through her window at least."

Gloria suppressed a sigh. He was right. There is no way to keep a child from fleeing.

GLORIA HASN'T YET VENTURED into downtown Fort Détroit. The idea of deserted monuments and empty buildings bothers her. But the address the sergeant gave her is to one of the rare office towers that is still occupied.

It wasn't easy to organize the trip. The main bus line serving Chesnay, Gloria's district, has been suspended for the past five months. Cab companies went bankrupt a long time ago, and it would take hours to walk to the emergency call centre. Eventually, it was Olivar, Francelin's cousin, who came to her rescue. He's the owner of a converted electric car he often uses to shuttle people to and from downtown. In exchange for a few kilograms of scrap metal from the dryer lying dormant in the basement of the yellow house, he agrees to drive Gloria.

The trip takes close to three-quarters of an hour. Rain pours down, and the sewers have overflowed in several places, necessitating detours. Francelin is in the front passenger seat; after their rounds, he'll get off at the Shling hall where his talents and tools are needed to secure the stage that collapsed when an attempt was made to set speakers on it. Beside him, Olivar steers his car as though it were a space shuttle travelling along the belt of a black hole, tacking between crevices, potholes, and roadwork abandoned partway through. He's forever exclaiming, "What on earth is that? What've they gone and done here?" He stops twice, first to pick up an old man who sighs impatiently every time they slow down, then a young androgynous person whose ears are hidden by the headphones of an old Walkman. The whine of notes falls like seeds from a hole in a bag.

"What's that you're listenin' to?" Francelin shouts.

"Bouzouki," is the teen's only muttered response.

"You should drop by the Shling later. Gypsy guitar like you've never heard before!"

"Have they started giving shows again?" asks Gloria.

"No, it's just background music while we work. No amps."

Soon the skyscrapers appear, windowless for the most part. The upper floors are surrounded by flocks of crows and smaller, pointier birds. Olivar drops the two other passengers off in front of a government building and pulls out again, grousing, "How can this be? Really!" Next, he comes to a stop in front of an elegant art deco building. As Gloria shuts the door, the structure's facade vibrates with the thrum of hundreds of pigeon wings. She looks again at the business card the officer gave her.

The elevator no longer works. Fortunately, the offices she's looking for are on the fifth, not the thirtieth, floor of the Godley Building. Patiently, Gloria climbs the stairs. On the steps, cigarette butts and bread crumbs speak of parallel lives, as frail as a body's last breath, that coexist with the lives of the staff still onsite.

The emergency call centre buzzes with a muffled ringing. The operators work in a closed room, but it's as though the calls for help well up from within the walls themselves. Gloria is greeted by a gravel-voiced receptionist. The skin of her face is so loose and wizened it looks like she's wearing a mask.

"I've come to listen to the recording of a call."

The woman hands her a form. Once Gloria has filled it out, the receptionist takes it back and disappears into another room, dragging her heels. It's hard to imagine her capable of managing five flights of stairs every day. Gloria envisages a small alcove fitted out between the warm bellies of the two photocopying machines, a filing cabinet-cum-bedside table, and a bed laid out on boxes of white bond paper. And a woman growing old between the walls of a building's gradual abandonment.

She returns with an ancient tape recorder and headphones. Gloria sits in a doorless cubicle furnished with one straight-backed chair. Her hand trembling, she hits play. —*Hello?* The timbre of

her granddaughter's voice shakes every fibre in her being. *—Yes, I'm listening,* answers an older woman's voice. *—It's our mother. She's drowning. —Where are you? —At home. Forty-five Clyde. —You say she's drowning? In a pool? —No. I think she's dead. I don't know what to do. —I'll send a team over. Meanwhile, I'll walk you through the steps to resuscitate her. Where is she right now?*

There's a click then a blast of white noise. Gloria startles at the clatter signalling the end of the recording. Looking up, she gives another start at the receptionist's penetrating stare.

"Tissues to your left," the woman says, and her voice grates like metal.

GLORIA HAS NO MEMORY of the hour she spent in the pouring rain on the bench in a square in front of the Godley Building. She is equally unaware of the drive back, only of arriving home. Francelin guiding her to her room, the single mattress on which she stretches out. Eunice bringing her a cup of chicory root tea. Gloria lets them. She sleeps with her eyes wide open, then closed. Waking, she finds herself alone with a few cookies and an old cracked phone on the bedside table. Francelin wanted to be sure she could call for help. Even though, in bad weather, the cellphone network doesn't cover Chesnay. Gloria lifts the device to try to catch a stray radio wave. One of the push-buttons drops to the ground. Iggy, the field mouse, mistakes it for another of the seeds it now eats from Gloria's palm and grabs the piece of plastic and sniffs, trying to find some hidden meaning to this mysterious object.

Catherine in Montreal (cr. Emily Mernin).

Two days in bed get the better of the cold she has

caught but not of her distress. Something deep inside plummeted when she heard the recording of what she assumes was Cassandra's voice. At each stage of her quest, with each new discovery, the dense and invisible mass lodged in her belly grows. When she tries to eat, food ends up trapped, obstructed by its bulk. Even air has trouble filling her lungs. There was something very dark in that recording, a shadow zone she can't seem to penetrate.

She steps onto Avenue Clyde without knowing what she's looking for. Jonah's house still looks deserted. In front of Theophilus's place, a woman and a small toddler with feverish red cheeks wait to see the nurse. She considers joining them. But what could Theo do? There is no bandage or remedy for a lump in the belly. She finds herself stopping in at Raquel's.

The old woman greets her as if she has been expecting her all along. Remembering what Eunice told her about their neighbour's former profession, Gloria assumes that her past may explain why she's ever-willing to open her door to others and to their ravaged bodies. Raquel leads her guest into a living room decorated like a colonial manor. She urges Gloria to remove her shoes and, without asking, begins palpating first her head, then her neck, her cheeks, her chest. At her stomach, she gives a triumphant "Ah!" like a prospector who has just struck gold in a depleted vein. With a commanding gesture, she motions for Gloria to lie down on the couch. The leather gives silently under her weight. With great difficulty, the old woman kneels in front of her patient and places her hands above her abdomen. Gloria stares at the misshapen fingers and the rings sparkling above her flowery blouse. Raquel orders her to close her eyes.

In the dark, Gloria can't tell whether the old woman's hands are touching her belly or not. She feels no pressure, only incredible heat, a burning breath flowing inside her that tracks like a dog in flames, searching for the bone, the growth, the meteor. Raquel utters a rasping sound somewhere between an exhalation and throat singing. Suddenly, the creature of fire collides with a weighty mass that begins to swell. Gloria trembles, the healer's rasp does nothing to reassure her. Finally, the mass bursts and unbearable heat

floods everywhere, from the tip of her nose to the curve of her heel. Gloria cries out and opens her eyes.

Raquel gets to her feet with a self-satisfied air. Gloria jerks upright, burning as though she's been plunged into a metal in fusion. "My body's on fire!"

"Yes, that's quite possible . . ." Raquel mutters, massaging her knees.

"But will it go away?"

Her expression stern, the old woman leans in closer to Gloria. "You darn well needed to be lit! That's what'll get you moving. The point isn't to rid yourself of it, the point is for it to push you to go further."

She leaves her patient alone with a large glass of water and a small glass of cordial. The wind, the sun, and the trees create daubs of light that dapple Gloria's feet. Wisps of voices can be heard outside, voices of feather and pine cone. In her head, embers glow.

Excerpted from The Future *(Biblioasis, 2023)*

GOBSMACKING ORGINALITY

JASON GURIEL'S SOPHOMORE VERSE novel (no, really), *The Full-Moon Whaling Chronicles*, followed in the footsteps of its precursor, *Forgotten Work*, by appearing in *Book Club*, the newsletter authored by *Washington Post* book critic Ron Charles. Charles writes: "Guriel's new verse novel is, if anything, even more bizarre and delightful [than the first] . . . Parts of the novel present a story about whale-hunting werewolves while other parts concern that story's fanatical readers. It's howlingly strange."

Naturally, we couldn't be more proud of our little furball. And offer you the following, to see what all the ~~fuzz~~ fuss is about.

from THE FULL-MOON WHALING CHRONICLES

The School for Wayward Teens was domed with glass
That showed the stars. A werewolf couldn't pass
Beyond the dome without their suit and bubble
Helmet. Craters pocked the landscape. Rubble.
Gravity was low, the surface barren
But for domes. Long tunnels formed a warren
Deep within the arid asteroid,
Connecting homes. Still, many wolves enjoyed
The surface — and the single moon above,
Which looped the asteroid as if in love.
These werewolves had a slow and springy gait.
They gently trampolined through Rabbit Strait.

If you walked east, however, you would reach
A row of booths that marked the so-called "Beach."
And if you stepped inside one, you could port
Up to the port, where vessels would depart.
The port looked like a kid's sketch of the sun:
A ring with ray-like prongs. It slowly spun
Above the asteroid. The prongs that spined
The ring were whaling ships; each ship's behind
Had slowly backed against the ring and mated
With an airlock. Docked, the ship then waited
For its crew, its prow set on a star.
Each ship possessed a single, yard-ruled spar.
Once hoisted, solar sails — flat panes of foil —
Drew in light and charged the lightspeed coil.
Ships detaching from the floating ring
Would stretch toward a distant point, then slingshot
Out of sight.
But from the glassed-in deck—
Where whalers oversaw the touchscroll tech,
The werewolves at their lecterns, scratching out
Commands—it looked like space had formed a spout
Through which the ship was moving. Stars were streaks,

And hours on the deck were really weeks
Back on the "Rock," the name the asteroid
Was known by. Ships returning from the Void,
With blubber in their holds, would find an older
Rabbit Strait. Some wives gave vacuum shoulder
To the husbands they had grown apart
From. (Thick fur slowly pelts a broken heart.)
The children, too, were distant. They'd been left
Behind for months—or years—and felt bereft.
Their fathers, whaling on the other side
Of far-flung galaxies, had all but died.
The School sat at the base of Good Wolf Hill.
It tried but failed to teach a single skill—
Avoiding trouble—to its troubled charges.
Recess found them outside, watching barges
Hauling mounds of rainbow-coloured yield
Mined from the Reef, the asteroid-strewn field
The Rock was part of. (Wolves had mined the Rock
Itself some years before.) Some teens would balk,
But most would one day whale or work the Reef.
They'd smoke their cigarettes, glass tubes that briefly
Melded with their helmets and allowed
The wolves to take a drag. A smoky shroud
Would briefly fill the helmets, curling all
Along the glass. The murky crystal ball
Each wolf now wore would purge the smoke by way
Of glass bots, programmed carefully to prey
On "output."
Every helmet's set of bots
Comprised a colony—and shared its thoughts
With other colonies. They worked together,
Different helmets, to determine whether
Noises their respective owners made
Were meant for others' ears and should be played
Within specific helmets. Bots would open
Channels when they felt their wolves had spoken.
That said, protocol suggested airing

Any gasps: the Rule of Oversharing.
(Helmets *used* to edit coughs and breath-
Like noise—until a young wolf choked to death.)
The glass bots were too small to spot by eye.
They *were* the glass and kept the air supply.
Beneath a pixiescope, they looked like grapes,
Which scaled to form assorted real-world shapes—
Like helmets. Nearly all their mass was given
To the air they held. The bots looked shriven
When depleted. Helmets, by extension,
Softened up and lost their rigid tension.
Helmets looked like squash: a smaller bubble,
Bulging from the main one, held the muzzle.

Excerpted from The Full-Moon Whaling Chronicles *(Biblioasis, 2023)*

BOOKSELLER BUZZ

"Cyberpunk in rhyming couplets? I was dubious—and wrong to be! *The Full-Moon Whaling Chronicles* is an astonishing genre-bender, and so masterfully spun that the poetic form seems effortlessly magical warp and weft. This is an immensely entertaining, yet deep, yarn, and a must for any lover of books within books within books."

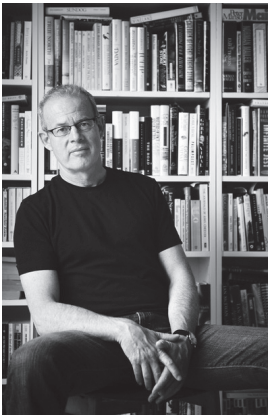
Amanda Qassar, Warwick's Books (San Diego, CA)

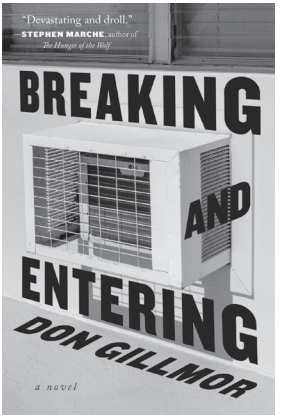
"Wildly inventive, yet tenderly human at the same time, Guriel's novel in verse about climate catastrophe, fandom, technology, and werewolf whalers is a delight. You'll be surprised, moved, sometimes baffled, but always engaged in this exciting and wholly original book."

Josh Cook, Porter Square Books (Cambridge, MA)

AN INTERVIEW WITH DON GILLMOR

by Rosemary Counter, for Zoomer *(August 24, 2023)*





L: *Don Gillmor (cr. Ryan Szulc);* R: *cover design by Michel Vrana.*

ON THE CUSP OF 50, and during a record-breaking Toronto heatwave, art gallery owner Bea Billings is having something of a midlife crisis. The protagonist of Governor General's Award-winning author Don Gillmor's new novel, ***Breaking and Entering***, is dealing with her son's recent absence from the family nest, her husband's (maybe?) affair, afternoon cravings for more and more wine, the breakdown of her ever-confrontational sister's marriage and the care of their elderly mother. That's a lot, obviously, and it somehow manifests in Bea's strange new hobby: lock-picking (with a surprisingly dedicated group of real-life online devotees), which turns into the titular breaking and entering (less popular and prevalent, you'd hope).

Anyone who's ever shoplifted, or peeked into their dinner party host's medicine cabinet to see what's what, will recognize the thrilling rush that accompanies Bea's new habit. While we don't recommend stealing, we do recommend living vicariously through Bea's sticky fingers. After enviously watching a rich woman pay for a $1,500 Yamamoto dress with $100 bills, for example, Bea follows the woman home, waits for her to leave, picks the Schlage single-cylinder deadbolt with a hairpin (yes, this book will teach you everything you need to know about locks) and proceeds to steal the dress. Back at home, she "poured a glass of white wine and swirled

it and took a sip and walked around the house in the glorious Yamamoto." (You're lying if you deny that'd feel totally awesome.)

Breaking and Entering is the 64-year-old author's first novel with a female protagonist, so how did Gillmor borrow from real life to get deep into Bea's unravelling brain? Will he admit to any similarly strange habits? And after all that diligent lock research, could he break into my house if he wanted? *Zoomer* found the journalist and author in rainy Nova Scotia to answer all these questions and some more.

ROSEMARY COUNTER: *I'm calling you in Nova Scotia. Are you relaxing at a cottage?*

DON GILLMOR: I am, but it's pouring rain, and cold. I'm wearing a wool sweater and a jacket inside. Not exactly how I prefer my summer vacations. I'm usually based in Toronto, but we booked this place months ago for a road trip. It's gorgeous out here, but the weather's not been great. It's good for getting a little bit of work done though.

RC: *How did this book come to be?*

DG: This one was actually a confluence of two things. The first was a short story that I wrote about 10 years ago about a young man who broke into houses for a living. He was married, and he'd tell his wife every morning that he was going off to work at a security company, but really, he was a professional thief. It was about how we don't always know everything about our partners, which always interests me. So, I went back to that story and thought maybe there was a novel in there. At the same time, I'd been having conversations with women friends who were telling me about this idea of middle-aged invisibility. They felt that at 50 or so they were suddenly invisible in the world. I thought about taking the idea of invisibility to its Zen pinnacle and have Bea breaking into houses and stealing things without ever being noticed.

RC: *Have you ever written from the perspective of a female protagonist before?*

DG: No, I hadn't actually. I've certainly had many female characters, but never the main characters, and this book's three main characters are all women. When I'm writing from a male perspective, I can always just go into my psyche and pull out some experience to work with. In this case, I had to work harder to take a bit of a leap. But once you start inhabiting someone's head, whatever their gender, you start to feel like you know them. Bea grew and came alive as I wrote.

RC: *I bet a lot of your female friends are going to think Bea's based on them.*

DG: I didn't base her on anyone in particular, and even if I did, I would never admit it! There are pieces of probably a dozen people I know in there, and just little moments I borrowed. There's a scene where Bea's at her birthday and she eats a brownie that's laced with marijuana. She takes a few bites and gets spectacularly stoned. That happened to a friend of mine, right before she was leaving for work, when she had a few slices of banana bread. It turns out her son's friend had made THC banana bread for him. She was stoned for, like, two days, but because she didn't know she'd taken it, she thought she was having a stroke.

RC: *I shouldn't laugh, but I am, because it's funny, and the same's true for the lock-picking and breaking and entering. How'd you come up with that?*

DG: I was just online one day and was surprised to find there were actually hundreds of lock-picking clubs across North America. They're all over the place. Of course, they see it as a hobby about escape or empowerment, but you have to assume that some of them at least use their skills for illegal purposes. I learned a lot online about locks and how to pick them. I fiddled around with them with a bobby pin the way they do in movies.

RC: *Could you break into my house if you wanted to?*

DG: No! I wouldn't mind being able to pick locks, but no luck. I sat there with a hairpin for 25 minutes then got frustrated and quit. Picking locks is a lot harder than it looks. Years ago, I helped a neighbour across the street pick the lock of their old Toyota with

a coat hanger. They'd locked their keys in their car, so they were initially so grateful, and then within five seconds, they were all very suspicious. Like, how in the hell does he know how to do that? I'd seen it in old television shows.

RC: *I don't break into cars or houses, of course, but I admit I've peeked into a medicine cabinet or two. Do you have any weird habits like Bea's that you'd like to confess?*

DG: I don't do that, but I know lots of people who do. I understand the impulse. For Bea, I think it's a combination of empty nest and midlife crisis, which can shift you for better or worse. I don't think I have any weird habits though, no. I should actually probably get some more habits, because they say you're supposed to as you get older. I'd like to learn to play guitar finally one of these days.

RC: *Weather, heat and climate change is clearly a theme in the book. Why's that so important to the story and could the same story happen in the dead of cold Canadian winter?*

DG: Part of it was just me putting my own climate anxieties into the story. I'm less obsessive now, but there was a phase where I was checking the melt rate of glaciers and tracking the hottest city in the world on any given day...

RC: *That sounds like a weird habit to me, by the way!*

DG: Ha-ha! Yes, I suppose it is. I'd also Google which cities had the worst traffic, which was actually sometimes Toronto. We'd even beat out L.A. I put all these worries into Bea and dropped her right into a heatwave. Heat is also good to work with as a writer, because it makes people angry and frustrated and they act in ways that they might not in January. In North American cities, crime spikes during the hot summers. In the winter, they tend stay home and stay out of trouble.

WHAT THE CRITICS ARE SAYING

"Surely the most interesting midlife crisis of the year."
Marion Winik, Oprah Daily

"Gillmor succeeds at pulling you into the hopes, dreams, expectations, desires, anxieties and pathologies of his characters . . . Like jazz, the moments of tension in the book give away to moments of relief, only to return to building tension once more . . . reading it will strike a chord."
David Moscorp, Globe and Mail

"In a quiet story that takes place over only a few summer months, the Canadian author deftly converges doubt, infidelity and the fragility of family in a narrative that is both thrilling and relatable."
Wadzanai Mhute, New York Times

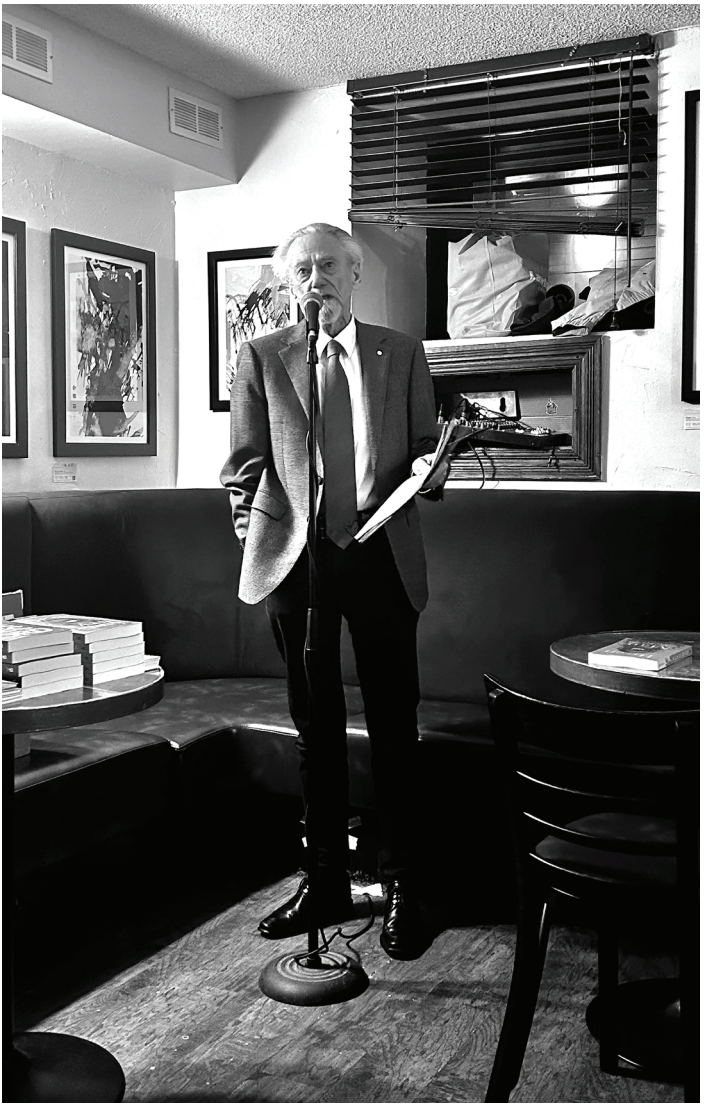
"Bea [is] . . . a powerfully drawn character . . . Every aspect of the novel feels true. Her relationship . . . is not only closely (almost clinically) observed, but also deeply felt, lived in. That balance, between critical distance and emotional immersion, lends the novel a powerful verisimilitude."
Toronto Star

"The genius of this book is to capture the exact way a familiar world of aging parents and divorcing friends and nice charcuterie platters could go right around the bend . . . A smart, funny, and sneakily terrifying version of the way we live now. (Do not read without working air conditioning.)"
Kirkus Reviews *(starred review)*

"Knowledge is mostly sadness in this intelligent . . . book: No matter where Bea breaks in, she keeps finding herself."
Sam Sacks, Wall Street Journal

A Pearl

Celebrating a birthday, a limited edition



of Great Price

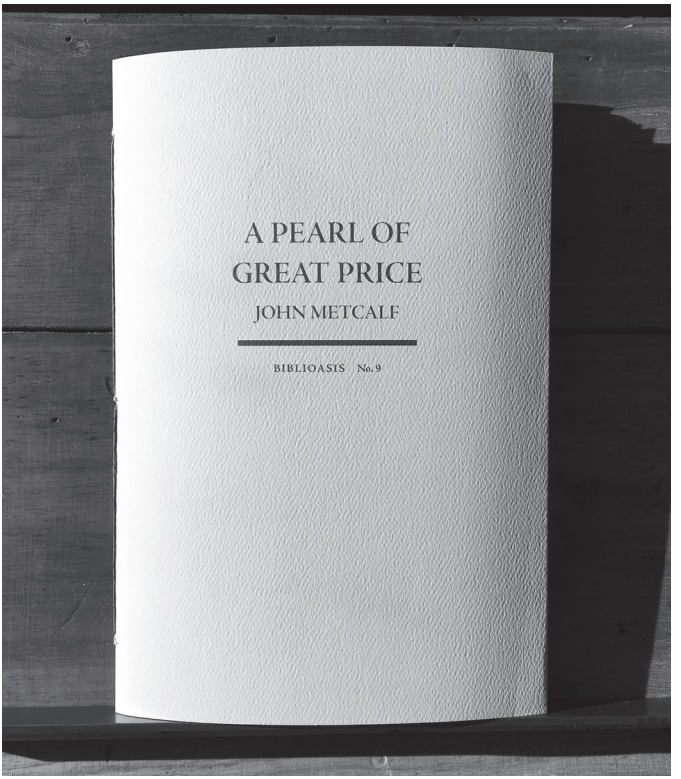
chapbook, and a legend in Canadian letters

ON NOVEMBER 25, 2023, writers, critics, bibliophiles, booksellers, and friends of literature gathered at The Manx pub in Ottawa to celebrate the 85th birthday of John Metcalf. Celebrating John is easy: few critics and editors have contributed so robustly to the development of Canadian literature, particularly the Canadian short story. Biblioasis is lucky to call him our Senior Fiction Editor, but that title hardly captures the support we've received from Metcalf since we started publishing chapbooks twenty years ago. Luckier still that John allowed us to indulge in throwing him a birthday party—complete with readings from Lisa Alward and Mark Anthony Jarman, Black Forest cake, and our friends at Perfect Books. The evening culminated in a lively reading from John's new short story "A Pearl of Great Price," the long-awaited ninth chapbook in the Biblioasis Short Fiction Series.

FACING: *John reads from "A Pearl of Great Price" (cr. Robin Collins);*
ABOVE, L TO R: *Lisa Alward reads from* Cocktail
and Mark Anthony Jarman reads from Burn Man.

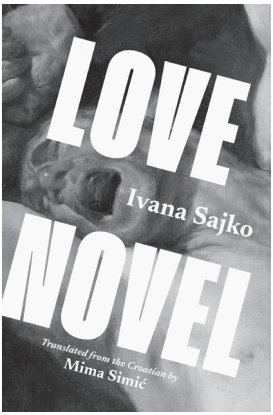
TOP TO BOTTOM:
Introductions by Dan Wells;
Jarman and Metcalf, two preeminent makers of literary mischief;
John shares a laugh with poet David O'Meara.

AVAILABLE NOW FROM BIBLIOASIS



AFTER A LENGTHY HIATUS, the Biblioasis Short Fiction Series returns with a new short story by John Metcalf. *A Pearl of Great Price* was typeset in Adobe Jenson by Vanessa Stauffer and printed offset on 70 pound Zephyr Antique Laid paper at Coach House Press under the watchful eye of master printer John DeJesus. Handbound in a cream Via Felt cover with 4 inch flaps and black Strathmore endsheets by Dan Wells, Emily Stephenson-Bowes, and Ashley Van Elswyk. 48 pages, 9781771966191; $25 CAD. Limited to one hundred signed and numbered copies, it is available exclusively from Biblioasis. See our website, email info@biblioasis.com, or call us at 519-915-3930 to reserve your copy.

ADVANCE PRAISE



Love Novel
by Ivana Sajko
Translated from the Croatian
by Mima Simić
February 6, 2024

"Lyrical and lacerating, claustrophobic and compelling."
James Crossley, Madison Books (Seattle, WA)

"A dark, twisted tango of a novel that forces you to re-define love. Gut punches everywhere, but the writing/translation: beautiful."
Shannon Alden, Literati Bookstore (Ann Arbor, MI)

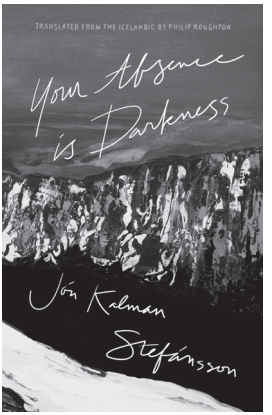
"A spotlight and laserscope sight on domestic blitz."
Ian McCord, Avid Bookshop (Athens, GA)

"I absorbed this novel in one sitting, taking slow, deep breaths at the end."
Beth Shapiro, Skylark Bookshop (Columbia, MO)

"Winding and powerful, Simić's translation captures the chaos of a relationship at its breaking point."
Nikita Imafidon, The Raven Book Store (Lawrence, KS)

"A compact, literate condemnation of the systems that crush the dreams of the working class."
Grace Harper, Mac's Backs Books (Cleveland Heights, OH)

for two forthcoming favourites



Your Absence Is Darkness
by Jón Kalman Stefánsson
Translated from the Icelandic
by Philip Roughton
March 5, 2024

"It is difficult to imagine how there could be a book published in 2024 that I will love more."

Lori Feathers, Interabang Books (Dallas, TX)

"A wondrous and haunting tale of lost memory and self . . . Deeply moving and harrowing."

Jesse Hassinger, Odyssey Bookshop (South Hadley, MA)

"I haven't underlined this many sentences in years."

Douglas Riggs, Bank Square Books (Mystic, CT)

"Timeless, a classic, and Stefánsson's writing is to be savored."

Erin Chervenock, Village Books (Bellingham, WA)

"This dizzying, death-leaning new classic could see a cult following…In Philip Roughton's expert hands, Icelandic author Jón Kalman Stefánsson writes my favorite kind of novel: one that measures every maudlin, throbbing emotion of the human experience; one that trusts the intelligence and attention of its reader; and, yes, there are killer one-liners on every other page. I know exactly who this novel is for."

Spencer Ruchti, Third Place Books (Seattle, WA)

ABOVE: *The Tecumseh Terry Fox Run;*
ABOVE: *Emerson and Dan debut our new shirts at the Detroit Free Press Half-Marathon.*

THE BIBLIOASIS RUNNING CLUB had a busy debut year. After the inaugural Winter Institute Fun Run* in Seattle, our members competed in the Running Factory Spring Thaw, the Toronto Marathon, the Montreal Half-Marathon, and Detroit Free Press Half-Marathon; snuck a quick 5k in between media meetings in NYC; ran 10k in honour of Terry Fox; tore up the trails in Windsor, Montreal, Toronto, and assorted farflung locales; recruited new members from around the globe; and printed a second run of tech tees featuring our short form logo, ALONE TOGETHER, on the back. Look for us this coming year hosting the First Annual AWP Fun Run in Kansas City in February, followed by the Second Annual Winter Institute Fun Run in Cincinnati!

* and Muffin Walk

BIBLIOASIS
RUNNING

REGISTRATION IS ALWAYS OPEN!
Email EMILY MERNIN
at emernin@biblioasis.com
to join the BIBLIOASIS RUNNING CLUB*!*

CANADIAN NOTES & QUERIES

THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH issue of *Canadian Notes & Queries* is on press now and arriving in mailboxes and newsstands near you in mid-December. Who knows: you may have even received the print newsletter you're reading right now with your subscriber's copy of CNQ. Which is to say: it pays to subscribe!

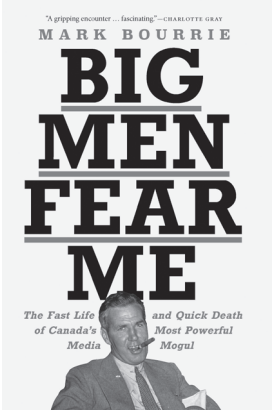
Designed, as always, by the inimitable Seth, and edited by Dan Wells, Issue 114 features:

- Randy Boyagoda on his life as a reader
- Vanessa Stauffer on the newly international Griffin Prize
- Canisia Lubrin on Dionne Brand
- A fiftieth anniversary celebration of Véhicule Press
- Book reviews by Tamara Faith Berger, Brian Bethune, Mark Bourrie, and more
- And the debut of Jason Guriel's comic, *The Pigheaded Soul*

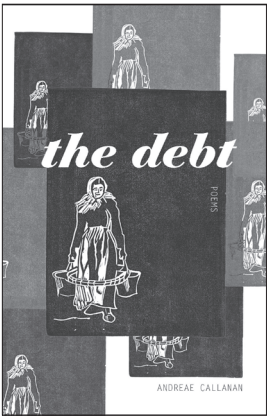
Trust us: you don't want to miss it!

SUBSCRIPTIONS:
visit www.notesandqueries.ca
or call 519-915-3930

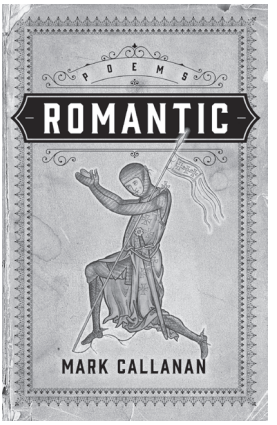
Cocktail by LISA ALWARD was reviewed in *The Literary Review of Canada* by critic Emily Latimer, who writes "Alward's sure-footed writing ably steers readers through stories about injuries, marriages, new parenthood, and other watershed moments."

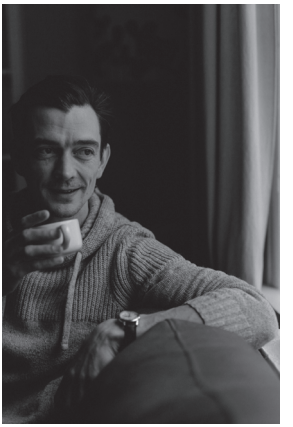


Big Men Fear Me, MARK BOURRIE's biography of *Globe and Mail* founder George McCullagh, was a finalist for the 2023 Ottawa Book Award in English Nonfiction, nominated for the 2023 Heritage Toronto Book Award, and longlisted for the $30,000 National Business Book Award.

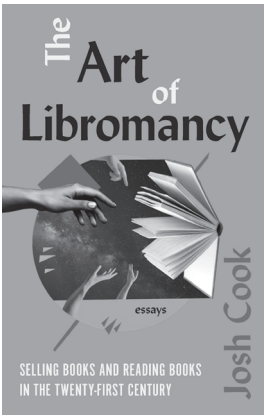


The Debt by ANDREAE CALLANAN was shortlisted for the 2023 E.J. Pratt Family Poetry Award, which recognizes excellence in writing by Newfoundland and Labrador authors. The jury said of the collection, "Rhythmic and engaging, Andreae Callanan's *The Debt* offers up keen observations of the poet's inner and outer worlds . . . From an unconventional sonnet corona to an understated aubade, the poems in this collection offer formal variation, and are at once wry and sensitive. *The Debt* is a most promising and resonant debut."





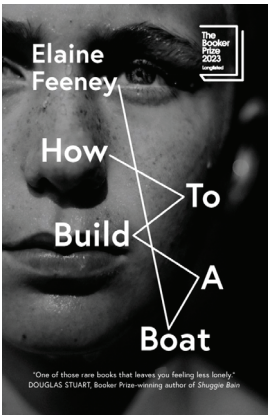
Romantic by MARK CALLANAN was longlisted for the 2023 E.J. Pratt Family Poetry Award! The poems in *Romantic* examine the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, both as individuals and as communities, in order to explain how and why we are the way we are.



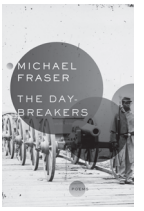
JOSH COOK was interviewed in *Esquire* for his essay collection *The Art of Libromancy* which was their August 2023 book of the month. *The Art of Libromancy* was also reviewed in *The Chicago Review of Books*.

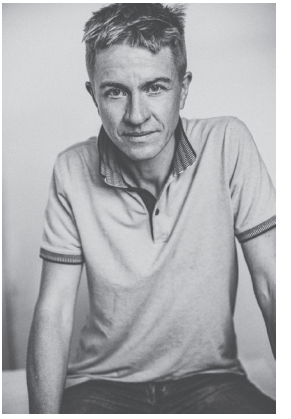
JASON GURIEL's epic verse novel *The Full-Moon Whaling Chronicles* was reviewed in the *Wall Street Journal*. Critic Liz Braswell writes "Without question this is the most imaginative piece of young-adult-adjacent fiction I have ever read." *The Full-Moon Whaling Chronicles* was also reviewed in *Kirkus Reviews*, *Quill & Quire*, *Toronto Star*, and excerpted in *Washington Post*.

GURIEL's *On Browsing*, from the Biblioasis Field Notes series, was nominated for the 2023 Heritage Toronto Book Award, which highlights the breadth and depth of Toronto's heritage.

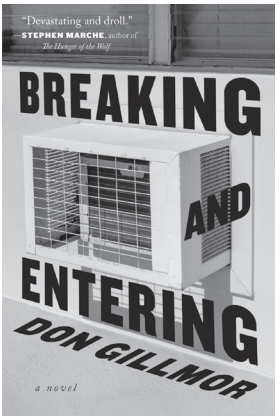


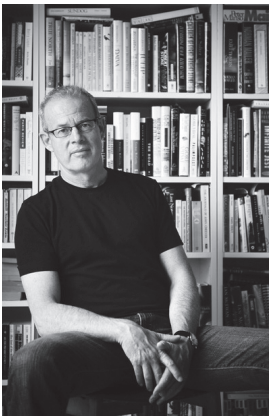
How to Build a Boat by ELAINE FEENEY was longlisted for the 2023 Booker Prize! The judges noted that "Feeney has written an absorbing coming-of-age story which also explores the restrictions of class and education in a small community. A complex and genuinely moving novel." *How to Build a Boat* was also shortlisted for the 2023 *An Post* Irish Book Awards Novel of the Year. First awarded in 2006, the *An Post* Irish Book Awards celebrate and promote Irish writing to the widest range of readers possible.



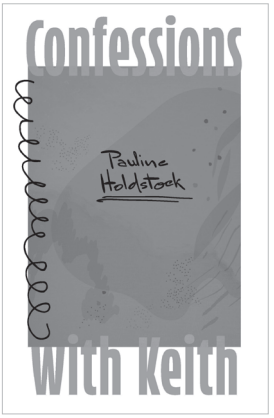


Both *The Day-Breakers* by MICHAEL FRASER and *The Affirmations* by LUKE HATHAWAY were finalists for the 2023 ReLit Award for Poetry!

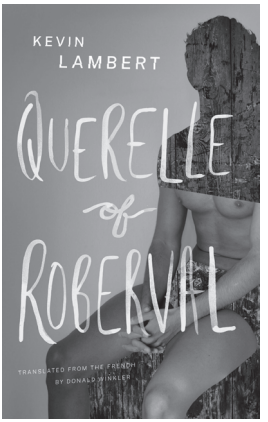


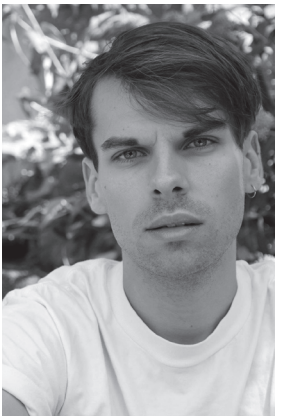


Breaking and Entering by DON GILLMOR was listed as one of *Oprah Daily*'s Best Books of 2023 and was featured on *Kirkus Reviews*' list, Our Favorite Fiction: Best of 2023. It was also reviewed in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and other places.

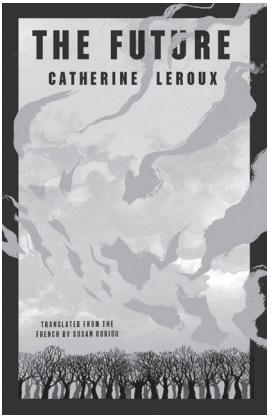


PAULINE HOLDSTOCK won the 2023 City of Victoria Butler Book Prize for her novel *Confessions with Keith*! Established in 2004, the City of Victoria Butler Book Prize awards a $5,000 prize to a Greater Victoria author for the best book published in the categories of fiction, non-fiction or poetry.

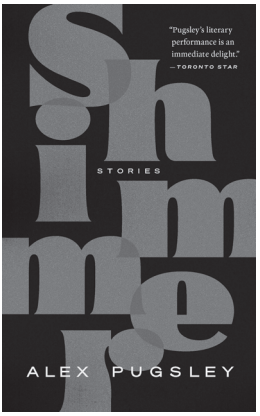


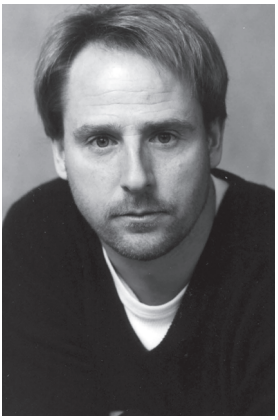


KEVIN LAMBERT's *Querelle of Roberval* (trans. by Donald Winkler) won the 2023 ReLit Award for Fiction! Founded in 2000, the ReLit Awards are awarded annually to book-length works in the fiction, short fiction, and poetry categories, and are considered the preeminent literary prize in independent Canadian publishing.

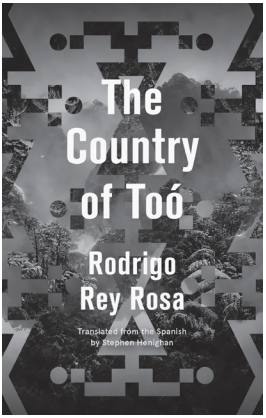


CATHERINE LEROUX's post-dystopian novel *The Future* received a *Kirkus* starred review, where it was praised as an "atmospheric novel (that) elevates disparate voices, drawing a complex picture of community-focused life beyond the family unit." It was reviewed in *Toronto Star*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Montreal Review of Books*, and was also listed as an anticipated fall title by the *Globe and Mail*, *Kirkus Reviews*, Tor.com, Lit Hub, and Book Riot.

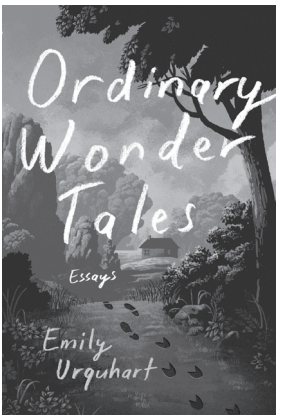




ALEX PUGLSEY's short story collection *Shimmer* was a finalist for the 2023 ReLit Award for Short Fiction.



The Country of Toó, a literary thriller by RODRIGO REY ROSA (trans. STEPHEN HENIGHAN, pictured) was described in *Kirkus Reviews* as "A deep, satirically streaked dive into the violent culture of Guatemala." It was also reviewed in the *New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, NPR, *Brooklyn Rail* and *Words Without Borders*, and was excerpted in Lit Hub.

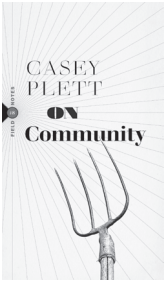


EMILY URQUHART's essay collection *Ordinary Wonder Tales* was a finalist for the 2023 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction! The jury praised, "Emily Urquhart's collection of essays about folklore, storytelling, and wonder weaves its own magic as it draws the reader deep into the heart of imagination and possibility. From a haunting childhood encounter to a deeply moving exploration of dementia, *Ordinary Wonder Tales* delights in the knowledge that the world can be both real and imagined. As we read, we discover that no trauma in a person's life ever sets them fully apart. Rather, human tragedies are endlessly absorbed and transformed by the wonder tales we share to bring us back to the fullness of life."

NEW FROM BIBLIOASIS

All the Years Combine:
The Grateful Dead in Fifty Shows
Ray Robertson

Robertson listens to and writes ecstatically about fifty of the band's most important and memorable concerts.



On Community (Field Notes #8)
Casey Plett

Looking at phenomena from transgender literature, to Mennonite history, to the rise of nationalism in North America, Plett delves into the thorny intractability of community's boons and faults.

Sleep Is Now a Foreign Country:
Encounters with the Uncanny
Mike Barnes

In this finely wrought, deeply intelligent memoir of madness, Barnes offers the captivating account of a mind restlessly aware of itself.

Off the Record
Edited by John Metcalf

Featuring essays on becoming a writer and short stories by Caroline Adderson, Kristyn Dunnion, Cynthia Flood, Shaena Lambert, Elise Levine, and Kathy Page.

Edited by Dan Wells and Emily Mernin and designed and typeset by Vanessa Stauffer, The Bibliophile *is produced with the generous assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and Ontario Creates.*

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Featuring:

Interviews with GAUZ',
ELAINE FEENEY, and
DON GILLMOR; excerpts
from new books by
CATHERINE LEROUX
and JASON GURIEL;
two of our FAVOURITE
FORTHCOMING THINGS;
and much, much more!