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Managing Editors	Dorothy Bentley Julia Kennedy
Submissions and Copy Editors	Daniel Randell Heather Mack Rachel VanderWoude
Faculty Advisors	Dr. Rita Dirks Dr. Darren Dyck Dr. Jonathan Goossen
Poetry Advisor	Elizabeth Gripping, MA
Web and Production	Wes Campbell Karen McLellan
Design and Layout	Julia Kennedy

Website: ambrose.edu/ambrosia-literary-review

E-mail: literaryreview@ambrose.edu

Cover Art: Neil Godfrey



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Editorial

Human creativity comes from God. Yet some take this gift of creativity more seriously—the restless souls who must write, paint, and compose in order to feel whole. One such individual is the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley who wrote in his “A Defence of Poetry” in 1821:

But poetry acts in another
divine manner. It awakens
and enlarges the mind itself
by rendering it the receptacle
of a thousand
unapprehended
combinations of thought
Poetry is the record of the
best and happiest moments
of the happiest and best
minds. . . . Poetry redeems
from decay the visitations of
the divinity in man.

Poetry, and more broadly literature, is the language of the heart that seeks to speak to the hearts, minds, and souls of others.

Poetry and short stories in particular come out of a person’s deep inner being and put strong emotions and feelings into words. Often, a poet seeks not only to articulate a life-changing experience but also to provide one. It is no wonder that sixty percent of the Bible is poetry, and Christ favoured the form of a short narrative, or parable, to teach us wisdom.

At Ambrose, I teach both poetry and short stories, and I am delighted to see such wonderful expressions of both genres in this first issue of *Ambrosia* magazine. However, more than these two creative arts come together in this volume: Neil Godfrey’s paintings are breathtaking, Dr. Darren Dyck’s explanatory essay grounds

us, Dorothy Bentley’s interview with Reneltta Arluk, the director of Indigenous Arts at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, is inspirational, and the poets and writers offer us insight, playfulness, heartbreak, encouragement, and honesty. Lastly, I want to recognize the meticulous work of the editors whose task lies in honouring the talent which God has placed within these poets and writers. Readers, enjoy!



Neil Godfrey

On Ambrose, Ambrosia, and *Ambrosia* (with a little help from C.S. Lewis)

It was almost to be expected that Ambrose, fourth-century Bishop of Milan and later *Saint*, would come to be called the *honey-tongued*. According to his biographer, when Ambrose was just an infant, he was left in his cradle in the open air and a swarm of bees drew near and covered his face. His father, who witnessed this event, terrified, saw the bees flying in and out of his son's mouth and said in that moment that if the boy lived, he would surely be great. As Ambrose's biographer puts it, borrowing a phrase from Solomon's Proverbs: "Well-ordered words are as a honeycomb" (16:24).

But even without such a propitious event in his young life, Ambrose's eloquence might have been anticipated, simply because he was ... Ambrose. The Latin *Ambrosius* comes from the Greek *ἀμβρόσιος*, which means "pertaining to the immortals" (OED). It is the masculine term from which we derive the feminine *ambrosia*, which more specifically designates the fabled food of the Greek and Roman gods—a food understood to confer immortality upon whoever consumes it and which, we might imagine someone like C.S. Lewis saying, makes the sweetest honey you've ever tasted seem sour.

Interestingly, there's a lot of debate as to whether ambrosia is actually a food or a drink. Those who take it to be a food naturally oppose it to nectar, the occasional beverage of the gods. But there is also evidence ambrosia was itself *drunk*, is itself nectar. In any case, the form it took, or even what it tasted like, is here a secondary consideration, because it is the function of ambrosia that invites our attention.

Apuleius, a second-century Roman writer, tells the story of Psyche, a girl of such surpassing beauty that people begin to worship her instead of Venus—indeed, begin to worship her *as* Venus. Enraged by the loss of the people's love, by this reduction in her *veneration*, the real Venus

sends her son Cupid (yes, the one with the bow) to punish Psyche. Struck by one of his arrows, she is to fall deeply in love with the most unfit, most inhuman of partners. And that is exactly what she does, but, unexpectedly, her beloved's inhumanity consists not in his grotesqueness—his monstrosity—but in that he is a god. Cupid himself.

It is, obviously, not the match Venus imagined, but, as anyone who reads Greek and Roman mythology knows, there is literally no one who can tell Cupid what to do. Even Jupiter, the king of the gods, calls the young (sometimes even infantile) god "lord." And yet, because he is king, Jupiter also cannot let the situation stand: no immortal, at least in Apuleius's version of the story, can marry a mortal. So what does the king do? He summons the gods to Olympus and, in the presence of them all, hands Psyche a cup of ambrosia (because here it's a drink), saying, "Take, Psyche, and become immortal."

It's a good story (so good that C.S. Lewis retells it in his last novel *Till We Have Faces*), but, to be clear, it's not just the story of a god and a girl who 'marries up.' It's the story of a soul—or, rather, the story of *the* soul (the *psyche*). It's an answer to the question: how does the soul become divine? And, of course, the answer is love—or, to be as precise as possible, the love of Love (*Cupid*) himself.

What makes the myth of Cupid and Psyche remarkable is its consonance with, or the way it anticipates (or echoes, if you prefer) the Christian myth—the 'myth become fact' (to cite Lewis yet again). We, too, believe that the immortality of our souls is down to the love of Love. God, who is Love—indeed, who is, like Cupid in Apuleius's story, both immortal and invisible—condescends in the person of Jesus Christ so that we might ascend. To borrow a phrase from Romeo, He gives us "love's light wings" that we might fly to

paradise.

But that's not all. Some traditions also believe in a God who commands us to eat and drink in order that we might receive our immortality. Jesus says, in the Gospel of Matthew, "Take, eat; this is my body," and then "Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood" (26:26-28). Jesus, the incarnation of Love, speaks these words to us; and *we* might say, having been introduced to the myth of Cupid and Psyche (and having thought about the myth a bit like C.S. Lewis might), that the Eucharist is ambrosia made fact—ambrosia perfected.

Which brings us back to Ambrose: Bishop of Milan, but also priest: administerer of Holy Communion. In one of his books, *On the Mysteries*, Ambrose writes not only about the importance of the Eucharist for Christian worship but about the power of Christ to transform the nature of things. He says,

If the word of Elijah was powerful enough to bring down fire from heaven, will not the word of Christ be powerful enough to change the characters of the elements? You have read of the works of the whole creation that he spoke the word, and they were made; he commanded and they were created. The word of Christ could make out of nothing that which was not; can it not then change the things which *are into that which they were not? For to give new natures to things is quite as wonderful as to change their natures.*

I'll say two things about this passage: first, even though Ambrose seems to be addressing those who deny the transformation of bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, his words apply equally well to the transformation of one who was mortal—whose nature was death—into one who's immortal. Indeed, *this* is the great mystery of Ambrose's text: we can all eat or drink and become *Psyches*.

Second, what effects this

transformation is not simply Christ's power, but the power of the *word* of Christ. Two times in *On the Mysteries*, Ambrose refers to God as "God the Word," a phrase that shouldn't surprise anyone who's read the first chapter of the Gospel of John. But what's really interesting in Ambrose's text is that when "God the Word" speaks, he speaks in poetry:

How fair and pleasant thou art
become,
O love, in thy delights!
Thy stature has become like to a palm
tree,
and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.
(Song of Solomon 7:6-7)

In the bread and wine, some believe we consume not simply Christ but the WORD that is Christ, and in consuming that WORD, we become not only immortal like Christ but also, for lack of a better word, *honey-tongued*. We are commissioned in that moment to become eloquent—not eloquent for its own sake, but because to be eloquent, to use language well, is to affirm our immortality. Poetry is *what language is* for those whose concerns and ambitions rise above the utilitarian and immediate.

There is a curious detail in Augustine's brief portrait of Ambrose in his *Confessions*: "When he was reading, his eyes ran over the page [...] but his voice and tongue were silent." In a time when people were accustomed to read everything aloud, whether they were in public or by themselves, Ambrose, the *honey-tongued*, read silently, took words into himself silently. It is a detail that draws our attention, as it did Augustine's, and suggests, I think, something like the following: Ambrose was not eloquent because bees flew in and out of his mouth when he was an infant; or because his name destined him for an ambrosial sweetness of speech; he was eloquent because eloquence in the form of the WORD entered him and compelled him to speak.

We are not animals; our *inhumanity* is of a distinctly divine sort. We write—poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, personal essays—because there is something beyond our mortal selves that we seek to capture in words, and not just ordinary words or the words of everyday speech. We seek to find the *right* words; we agonize over the choice of words, because what language does is important; it is not meant simply to convey the *gist*. Words have power: Christ’s words, Elijah’s words, your words. For this reason, *Ambrosia*, this literary review, this venue for truth-told-slant, exists.

Of Men and Fruit Trees

Young Adam fell from man's intended place
When from forbidden fruit he took one bite.
He damned all humankind, apart from grace,
And learned shame from that apple of wrong and right.
Young Augustine, for love of disobeying,
Stole from a neighbour's tree unpleasant pears.
Yet guilt for this small crime drove him to praying,
And plagued him to his core for many years.
Young Washington was taught by cherry tree,
Which, though it was his father's, he did fell,
And rather than to lie, learned honesty –
If one believes the tales that men do tell.
How strange a thing t'would be if God should please
To teach all men such lessons from fruit trees!

Death Cap in November

Frost-fall warns us to be softer. See, this damp winter is a blessing on your studio apartment. Last spring, an icicle bore through the skull of the downstairs neighbour like a dull axe, but you are safe in here with your groceries and mail delivered to your bed, pushed against a wall far from the window. You are safe with your lambs' wool cape round your neck, soft like crushed violets. Your hair is splayed on the pillow and your head is a silver, dusty moth. You rub the wool of your plaid quilt with raw, red palms, scratch scratch scratch until the cat in his suit and tie puts simple syrup in an eyedropper to your beak. You stare into the hollow, hairy cactus, a gift from your dead neighbour. The frost lines the windowsill in the same way that the pillowy mold sits atop the strawberries in the fridge. The cat moves to the bathroom radiator, takes up camp on a mildew-pink towel, which he has folded carefully into a diamond. The snow will come soon now, barrelling its third winter wake. The garlic hangs in fragrant slowness from the old nail on the pantry door. The cat sticks his paws in your yellow boots as if to say, come along now it is only ice and the garlic needs to be used up before January.

Erin Vance

Lac La Biche

3pm

Sucking on peach pits
 they giggle and stare with thorny faces
 dusty boots kicked onto the grass as if
 some barefoot scandal might save them
 from a padlocked barn and a church wedding;
 no lovers, no broken arms
 these women suck salted meat in their
 blackened skirts with dry lips.

2am

The porch light casts a dead glare, it moves with the moths and the swing the stubs of her ruined toes twitch beneath her blood-soaked dress. Where are her boots, the sudden moon cheated her out of cluster lights, the insects suck her breath and she is pulled, sodden and warm into the house of her father.

Interview with Reneltta Arluk



Reneltta Arluk is an actor, playwright, storyteller, director, producer, and is the director of Indigenous Arts at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. You can find out more about Reneltta's work at <http://akpiktheatre.com/>

DB - Hi Reneltta. It is a pleasure to speak with you today. You are an actor, playwright, storyteller, theatre director, and producer. You graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Fine Arts-Acting degree in 2005, as the first Aboriginal woman and the first Inuk to graduate from that program. How did that feel?

RA - I was already acting in Whitehorse. An artistic director there told me I was good but that I needed professional training. I agree. He recommended the BFA Acting program at the University of Alberta. I applied, auditioned and got in. It was challenging; the program at that time was not open to diversity. Their training method at the time was very European. The struggle was that they had never worked with a non-indigenous actor. Anytime we did any kind of exercise, it was difficult. I felt misunderstood

and because of that I really struggled. My learning curve was high. I stuck through it though and graduated. A few years later I was back on the mainstage there doing Annie Mae's Movement for an MFA Director. It was there that I was apologized to. I never asked them to. It was nice to hear. I went there because the U of A has a strong reputation. It helped my career. They are changing now. There is growing diversity on their stage.

DB - That is wonderful. When I had a look at your online presence, one of the things which stood out among your achievements is your entrepreneurial spirit in starting Akpik Theatre, a professional Indigenous Theatre company. Where is it based?

RA - It is based in Yellowknife but it has its productions shown across Canada.

DB - Could you tell me about the vision that sparked the idea and how you started the project?

RA - When I graduated, I was immediately working. As much as I struggled, I had a fairly strong career. My mentor said; "You can't wait for the phone to ring. You have to get your stuff out there." I was already a poet. And before that I was always a storyteller. I wrote *TUMIT*; I decided to create an umbrella theatre company that would foster other people's stories as well. Akpik produces my work as a playwright, but it also produces other works. Akpik is the name given to me by my great-grandmother; it is a berry that grows in the north; the land isn't conducive to growing a lot of fruits or vegetables. It's a struggle for them to thrive, but the akpik berry does thrive. It's a fitting name when looking at growing the Arts in remote spaces.

DB - Yes, I agree. As an actor and director, you've done some interesting things... you toured northern Greece for six months performing?

RA - It was amazing; it was a life changer, really. I was at a crossroads. I needed to get out of the places I felt weren't challenging me or helping me grow. Relationships close to me, and my relationship with Canada, were strained. It's difficult to be Indigenous in this country: there's racism, oppression, colonialism. When it starts to feel like you can't be who you are... I needed to figure out who I was. Who am I? What am I made of? The tour was great, but it was very bare-bones. There were four to six people in each cabin; showering from a bucket; washing clothing in a bucket. I loved that it felt like I was living in the bush on a boat. I performed in *Utopian Floes* as part of Caravan's Tall Ship Theatre.

DB - And in Edmonton, you coordinated the first annual Rubaboo Aboriginal Arts Festival in 2009; and the first play you produced was *TUMIT*. It premiered in Edmonton as part of Workshop West's International Canoe Festival in 2011. What was that time like for you?

RA - I was commissioned to do that at the time by Michael Clark. He had done a lot of work with First Nations up in the Yukon. I met the right people who helped me to go in the direction I needed to go. He was one of them. *TUMIT* was workshopped in the Northwest Territories and premiered in Edmonton. It went on to be part of The Talking Stick Festival in Vancouver and performed in French and English in Montreal, Quebec.

DB - As Playwright-in-Residence at Gwaandaak Theatre in Whitehorse, you were working on a play about Tookoolito, a guide and friend to Charles Francis Hall. Hall was an Arctic explorer. Were there themes you wanted to explore with the play?

RA - I've written scenes of it. It's an epic saga play. Tookoolito had an incredible life. My mentor gave me a book, and I researched her. Her feminist spirit is quite strong; and her journey speaks to me.

Every time I talk about her, others come forward to share their information about her. Kenn Harper—he's a living historian; I check in with him and he gives me insight. She was a guide at 15 years old. She met the Queen. She adapted traditional materials and made English attire out of them. She never compromised her beliefs. She was a trailbreaker. I got stuck in her history and I didn't know how to get unstuck to write her story, so I went to Norway, to the Arctic waters on a tall ship. I wanted to have her experience of being on a tall ship in the Arctic. I did a residency, and it really did unstick me. Now I just need the time to write.

DB - There is a video posted on the *ARC Poetry* magazine site where you speak about your early childhood on the trapline with your grandparents. It sounds like you had a special relationship with them.

RA - Yes. I was raised in the north. My mother and father were 17 years old when they had me. Mom became a single parent. She went to finish her education, so I lived with my grandparents until I began school. I spent summers with them. My grandfather has since passed but I still have a close relationship with my grandmother.

DB - I very much appreciate your poem, *Blue Collar, Red Trash* which appeared in *ARC Poetry* magazine, Fall 2013. My class studied the poem in our (Ambrose U) Canadian Literature class. When we analyze literature, I sometimes wonder what the artist's intention was. Could you tell me about your process in writing the poem, and what you would like students to learn from it?

RA - *ARC Poetry* was focusing on the north for one of their editions. The north is a place which is very compelling for many people; I thought it was very important to be part of the *ARC* magazine launch itself. Interestingly, the launch was in Ottawa and

I was the only Indigenous person there. People have different perspectives of what north is; I was the only one there from (above the tree line). The poem... only certain people can write about life in that specific of a way. It is about the similarities between what appears as two polar opposites. The difficulty is that the two don't often recognize the similarities in each other. They are quite similar. Sometimes, something just hits you; that is what happened with this poem. It came to me and I had to write it down.

DB - I appreciated your raw honesty in the poem.

RA – It was written non-apologetically. Can you tell me what you see in it?

DB – Now I'm on the hot seat! (*laughs*) Yes... I appreciated how you brought up important themes, such as the Indian Act... you tell Whites to take it and shove it, but you also say, I'll pray for you if you pray for me. There is a strong political message, yet also a reconciliatory tone. It was very well done.

RA – Thank you.

DB – In 2017 you were appointed Director of Indigenous Arts at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. The position must carry joys and growth opportunities. What do you enjoy most about the role and what has surprised you?

RA – The position initially programmed for six-months of the year; but Banff Centre is now enfolded into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission mandate. Indigenous Arts now has a full time presence on Campus and does year round programming of all arts. I do cross-cultural and cultural work; I support Indigenous work nationally and internationally. Right now, in our institutions, they are making space for Indigenous artists. I knew if I did it on a smaller scale, I could do this on a larger

scale. I serve; that is what I do. I am a server. I haven't really gotten my feet into the earth there yet.

DB - What's next for you, Renelitta?

RA - I am at the Banff Centre for the Arts and will be for some time. I want to build a vision there; I am learning how to put it together. There are many basic things which need to be done to build the program. I have pretty strong administrative skills: I balance between business, administration, and creation. I now have staff, which helps (*laughs*).

DB - Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about?

RA - Creating space for Indigenous voices: I'm a northerner, so my voice will always have that perspective. We have to create space for all of our voices. I think it is great that my poem is part of the larger literary library. It can create this greater discussion like that which your class had. There are other poets, other artists; we need to continue to make space for Indigenous artists in non-Indigenous spaces.

DB - Thank you so much for allowing *Ambrosia* to interview you. All the best to you in your creative pursuits.

RA – Mahsi cho, Quyanaq, Thank you.

Love (Described)

No one can hold time's quick feet back!
He's a champion runner
Sprinting the track
If I could stay his foot but a while
I'd write on your heart
And drink from love's vial

Give me the potion of purity's kiss
Innocence to taste upon your lips
I invite the joy of truth in love
To come like a whirlwind
And wrap us up

Julia MacArthur

Winter Morning

It has been snowing all night.
Not a furious storm but large placid flakes,
Like broad ashes floating.
The snow makes for hard work
And it is still yet falling.
I am worried for the melting of all this covering,
But today I enjoy the soft crunch as I walk -
The pleasant response of snow compressing.
Crisp morning air reddens my cheeks,
A subtle sting and the spreading, warm rush of blood.
The sun is glowing softly through a veil of cloud.
A matte finish on this one, simple moment in time.
Everything is pale, fluid, without distinction,
Except for dark branches that are patiently waiting,
Passing the vacant winter hours in blissful slumber.
The sun's persistent radiance is muted by the cold
But soon the earth will shift and its abundance will be known.
I am comforted as I tread in this quiet shield.
Sober white:
It is a fresh canvas,
And my footprints are part of the landscape.

Old Tom

Small towns are full of characters. Not that the city is barren of such creatures; it's just that small-town living invites intimacy with these characters whereas in the madding crowd of the city they often pass unnoticed.

I like characters; they are always interesting and sometimes arresting. If I must share my time, let it be with a character. This colourful one percent of our neighbours can provoke you, inspire you, or simply soften your heart. In the end, I cherish our relationships and mourn their passing.

Tom was a character that moved in the shadows of our small town. My neighbour was always 'Old Tom' to me; I never knew him in his youth. He was shy, passing unnoticed or ignored by most of the other neighbours. He had no nobility or beauty that would engage your attention, most would say he was scruffy and boring. Despised and forsaken, he kept to himself and his routines. But Old Tom and me knew each other, at least, from a distance.

I first met Old Tom when he was sprawled on the dry spring grass beneath a large cottonwood tree. On that day, the warm spring sun was nursing his winter-wounded bones and muscles. During one of his stretches, he caught me watching him. He froze, one leg fully extended and an arm raised over his head. Our eyes locked. We stared as if we each found a measure of peace within the other.

Although we communed for only seconds, it seemed like an hour. I don't know what he saw in me, but his bright green eyes captured my gaze. They belied his age, to which the rest of his form testified most accurately. His lean body bore witness to a skimpy diet; Old Tom was not athletic, at least not anymore. Torn, cropped ears adorned his gray, dishevelled and matted hair. This and a crooked forearm told of a hard life, most probably filled with strife at one time or another. The bloody scab on his

nose confirmed either a recent conflict or an accident. As he finished his stretch and looked away, I had no doubt that he was acquainted with sorrow and grief. I continued to stare at my indolent neighbour until his nodding head came to rest on a tuft of moss and he slumbered in his security. Stealing away in silence I left him to his dreams.

Where did Old Tom live? What did he do with his time? Did he have any friends? Nobody I knew could answer these questions; they didn't seem to care. His intermittent appearances suggested his home was some distance from my own. Most often I saw him when the weather was fine, never during a rain or snowstorm. Always alone, he mostly haunted the alleyways in town where there were fewer people and cars. He ignored my invitations to meet and evaded any attempts to approach him.

One day as I sat on our back deck, I spied him on the other side of the fence. With time on my hands, I decided to follow him in the hope of discovering where he lived. I tracked him from a distance as he limped down the alley. He seemed casually interested in the backyards of my neighbours except when they contained a dog – those he avoided. I didn't sense that he was casing the neighbourhood as it was familiar ground to him and there had been no reports of mischief. Sometimes he would stop, scratch his ear, stare into the distance or perhaps just listen, then he would continue on his way. After a couple of blocks, he suddenly disappeared while I was fiddling with the zipper of my jacket. Did he know I was following him? I never did find his home.

Summer came and went just like Old Tom. By fall, his ratty and worn coat presaged the hard times yet to come. My heart went out to him on those cold, dark winter mornings. As was my early morning habit, I sat before

the fire in the dark warmth of my living room with Jesse, my Shetland sheep dog. I sipped my coffee while Jesse and I shared toast lathered with my favourite black currant jam. Outside the window, the snow lightly fell on the thermometer that told me it was twenty-five below zero. I was regarding the early morning scene when a shadowy form emerged from behind the big spruce tree. The silhouette limped slowly across the driveway; it was Old Tom. He struggled to the top of a snow bank and sat looking; looking here then there at nothing in particular. At least nothing I could see. His steamy breath floated off into the darkness while he contemplated the dawning of a new day. Then this shadowy enigma slowly rose, limped into another shadow and disappeared.

I suppose it was inevitable. Spring arrived as it always does but Old Tom didn't. I routinely checked the old cottonwood for any sign of him. My nonchalant neighbours impatiently dismissed my inquiries about him. As the days grew longer and warmer, I began to miss him. An old friend of sorts, though we never shook hands or shared so much as a drink, there was, nonetheless, a spirit of camaraderie. Perhaps he just moved away; no notice, no farewell. Of course family or the authorities may also have been involved. That was my hope, but lurking in the back of my mind were other more sinister imaginings. He was old and the winter air was cold. They say pneumonia is an old man's friend. Maybe the winter got him; I don't read obituaries. He was probably arthritic judging by his movements and crippled arm. Perhaps a car or truck took him as he crossed the street some dark night; there was nothing in the paper.

My wife never knew him like I did, but she at least acknowledged his presence in the neighbourhood. One day in May, she called me to the woodpile beside the garage. "Now be really quiet and don't move," she commanded, "just watch and listen." I heard it first. Soft, clear mewling then a

small, furry gray form passed between the pieces of firewood. Perfect, perky little ears rose from behind a log. Two flashing green eyes, a button-black nose and long whiskers completed the image. "I'm going to keep him," announced JoAnna. "I've been feeding him because his mom has abandoned him. Soon I'll be able to catch him."

I never saw my boring, arthritic, old gray friend again. Nevertheless, there are times when I walk into the living room and sitting on the back of the couch looking out the window is the silhouette of Old Tom. I still miss him, but he left me a consolation: two actually. His son, true to his father's character, lives with us but at his pleasure, by His grace. Tom Jr. and I will grow old together but unlike Old Tom, he enjoys an easier life in the sun. Memories of Old Tom arise as I watch his son, an element of my personal communion with a character from my past.

“. . . He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, knowing sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” (Isa 53:2-3)

Sketches

Rain splashing on the edges
Of dark blue denim.
Petals of cherry blossom trees
Surrendered to the world beneath-
Pink scared white by the cool ocean breeze.
The moon's overcast gleam,
The slip of salt from a cheek,
The rain that mixes in the grief.
Shelter in a gallery of white walls,
The painter's empathetic draw.

I looked in frames
Trying to mimic the gaze
Of brown scholar eyes-
The conversations we might find
Over a hung sketch that wasn't finished yet.
The pencil lines,
The paint it'll never find.
A few months back you said
You loved
Rough drafts from an artist in France-
You said it didn't matter
That he never
Coloured them in.

You and I were artists who often sketched
Without pencils or pens,
Experts in that youthful, imaginative craft.
Storing all our canvas plans in daydreams and conversations
Under quilted sheets
In comfy knitted sleeves.
Morning, afternoon, evening eyes
Marvelling in all the shades we might find
When pencil lines and paint would unite
In our memory making,
In our growing-old-time:
The yellow of kitchen walls,
The purple of our backyard lilacs,
The blush pink of a long dress,
The red of wine after unpacking boxes.
The muted white of December,

The brown stain of wood on a bedroom
dresser,
Your favorite work shirt,
The tan colour of your cheeks
In an Ontario summer.
The hues:
The yellows
The reds
The pinks
The blues.
The colours we never got to choose.

Sketches without pencils or pens
I want to know how we would've coloured
them in.
The work of lost time-
Palette knife,
The colours I'll never find.
My wet denim,
My inability to understand,
I hear you talking about pencil lines in
France-
"Oh love, they're the prettiest
Even though the painter
Never got a chance."

Heather Adam

For Mark

Mid-August kisses
Blushes as red as raspberries on garden bushes.
We slept in the arms of B.C Mountains.
In high heat you sheltered me
Under the wooden deck
Leaned back on a creaky wooden chair
Painted red.
When the Sun was at her highest
Your smile stretched to its widest.
I heard the breeze rustling, whistling:
'Love, love it's everything he's holding,

It's everything you're holding.”

Oh how you held me,

How I held you.

The sun shone her spotlight

On the humble brown of your eyes.

You placed an old guitar strap on your back and

As your fingers danced on worn in frets,

The wildflowers grew taller.

You played melodies that felt like

Golden prairies, painted skies.

Oh how the daisies wanted to reach your strings

To hear more clearly the way you made them sing.

Oh how I want to reach the day you played those strings

I keep on thinking of the way you made them sing.

Your guitar sits in my hands

The scratches, the warmth,

The chipped paint on the back.

I strum, I sing till my voice grows tired:

The only way to lose track

Of these eternal hours.

But nothing sounds the same.

The daisies weep

Losing delicate petals in spring rain.

The wind laments:

Low, sullen, deep.

Lover gone:

String bending hands

Sent to be with God.

Oh love,

How did you make these strings sing so sweetly?

Oh my love,

How could I ever

Live up

To you

Living in me?

Ducks

May I sit here? You approached from my left side. I had been hiding out, away from the party.

Of course, I replied as I pushed over, making room for both of us against the tree.

Why are you here and not there? I watched you as you sat down, nearly touching me. I shrugged, turning my head forward again.

Not really my thing, I replied. You seemed to accept that without question.

It was quiet for a long while after that. We sat under that great oak tree, watching the ducks in the pond dip their head into the water, searching for anything that might fill their empty selves. In and out, in and out, over and over again. They didn't seem to mind the repetition and I didn't mind the silence. The sky was bright blue and the clouds made shapes like people. You didn't say much at first, but I knew you were watching me, wondering what I was thinking about, wishing that I might just say the first word. You sighed and turned your head back to the ducks. In and out, in and out.

Tell me a story, you said.

What kind of story? I asked.

Yours.

Well, I grew up here and I've never been anywhere but here. My mom is a-

No, not that kind of story, you interrupted. I want to know about the truths that made you. Do you feel sad watching these ducks? Do you feel lost in this world? Like maybe you're just wandering, looking for a place to call home? Or maybe you're okay? You turned your head just slightly, just enough for me to catch the mischievous glint in your eye.

I turned my head towards you. I

watched you. In those few seconds your soul was exposed and I knew who you were. I knew even then that I loved you. I smiled because I, too, had wondered the same as you.

This world is finite, I said. There are places to go and things to see, but it ends eventually. It feels like it won't ever be enough.

I feel like I am always searching for more, you know? More of everything. It always feels sort of vacant in here. You placed your hand on your heart. Do other people feel like this?

I shrugged. I didn't know how to answer your question. I remember telling you that one day I was going to see it all. Perhaps it's better once you've seen it all.

I glanced over at you and we made eye contact. I could have got lost in those eyes; they knew everything and nothing at the same time. You smiled, revealing a small dimple in your left cheek. You shifted in the grass, back to the ducks.

Those ducks, you said, nodding towards them. Do you think they're happy? Do you think they even realize that they know nothing? That they are nothing?

Ignorance is bliss, I guess. I wanted to say so much more, but you had so many questions that I didn't know how to answer. I never quite knew what to say to you. Your mind was a beautiful place, but I didn't ever feel like I could completely grasp your thought process.

You gestured over your shoulder with your thumb, in the general direction of the party. Do you think those people are happy? Like really and truly happy?

I looked back over my shoulder. My mother was wearing a white summer dress. She laid her hand on my father's shoulder

as she tilted her head back and laughed. I don't know what she was laughing at, but the oncoming dusk caught the red in her hair and it shone like a thousand suns.

It was hard for me to grasp that they would be anything but happy.

Yes, I think so.

Do you think there is something more waiting for us?

I hope so.

I wanted to tell you that my heart yearned for you. That we could stop talking about those damn ducks and just sit together. I didn't know anything, too. Just like them. I desperately wanted to touch you, just a hand on your shoulder. To tell you that even if there was nothing beyond here, even if you never got any of your questions answered, I would still be here.

I turned my head to say something, but changed my mind. I watched the ducks instead. There was a mama and her babies; she was teaching them about life. Like that mama duck teaching her babies, you taught me something that day.

Do you want to run away together? I didn't say anything. I was never quite sure if you were serious or not, but I know that had you asked again, I would have gone anywhere with you. You didn't ask again.

You picked at the grass, plucking it from the ground. You put the longer strands to your lips and made whistling sounds. I tucked my hair behind my ear, desperate for you to just look at me one more time, willing you to just take one more glance my way. I was ready for you to see me.

I watched you some more. You were always so open and I was always so closed. I wanted to be you just for a little while. I wanted you to hold me in your arms and drown me in your life.

I think it's good that we have each other

in such a finite world, you said. You grabbed my hand then. We leaned back against the tree. It was us against this finite world. I breathed in the smell of summer air. I watched the ducks, intrigued by their ability to just enjoy the in and out of everyday life.

Years later, when I thought back to us and this moment, long after you were gone, and my days were in and out, I realized that it's not the world that is finite. It's us.

He Calls

I.

I miss you, he whispers
Longing stirs in my soul

I miss you

He

calls

I look for him in the hallowed halls
Eloquence crushes my simple heart

I look for him under steeples

Whitewashed facades form fences

I look for him in nature

Leaves and streams melody his name but

He

is not there

I look for him in people

Pixelated fragments echo encoded

Where are you

He

calls

Palpable longing strips my heart

Agony unabated drives me onward

II.

Surely, he will save me

From the fowler's snare

And from deadly pestilence

Fear not terrors by night

Nor arrows flying by day

Surely, he is my refuge

Because she loves me, I will rescue her

When she calls my name, I will answer

I will be with her in trouble

I will deliver her and honour her with long life

I will show her my salvation

My feet like the deer tread on the heights

Though I stumble, I will not fall

Though I am injured, I am not destroyed

Here you are
 Rest in my shelter, dwell in my shadow
 I am your refuge; my strength holds you
 Longing grows in his presence
 Touch his wounds, hide under his
 wing
 A song
 Bubbles like a stream
 Suddenly
 re clothed in white
 Two gifts
 Limitless love
 sweet sorrow
 Parting

III.

I miss you, he whispers
 Longing stirs in my soul
 I miss you
 He
 calls
 I look for him in the hallowed halls
 Eloquence fills my simple heart with
 truth
 I look for him under steeples
 Whitewashed faces uncovered
 wounds
 I look for him in nature
 Leaves and streams melody the
 name
 He
 is there
 I look for him in people
 Un-encoded pixels align
 Where are you
 He
 calls
 Palpable love fills my heart
 Sweet sorrow
 reuniting calls me onward

The Faerie King

The Tree of Life yields its fruit to she,
Wretched transgressors in her womb bound;
Accepting the morsel to eat blame he,
Thine faery tale scripted truth now found.

Shrouded in myth Hero dons humility,
An unlikely war rages on Calvary,
Suffering and dying he gloriously conquers;
Rebel hearts unbecoming Hero covers.

The quest fulfilled the white stead named,
Temptation wreaks havoc clawing virtue;
Delightful pleasures conceal death's treasure.
On clouds rides Hero, his bride be claimed.

Faerie king's image dimly mirror,
Claim thine swords thou art warriors all;
Hold shields steadfast the enemy approaches,
Hear the call, unite, reverse the fall.

Vanquish the Dragon snapping his tail;
War's far shore ebbs bloodlust to peace.

A Thing Spoilt

“Bill,” Brenda said, “This is the only ship that will ever come in for you. So don’t blow it.”

After that putdown, what could I say? It wasn’t for any slice of any pie that I gave permission to be named as my brother’s executor. Brenda backpedals with the only sort of apology she knows and tells me these past months have frayed her nerves. The four months I’ve searched for work. Try that at age fifty-nine in this economy and see how far you get. This has bothered her.

“Now D.W.’s accident,” her voice quavers. “It is too much.”

She’s brought out her photos and of course she knew exactly where to find my brother’s images. Even the poorest one gets cradled in her hand.

“Nobody should die alone. If I could have been there for D.W...” Her sentence is interrupted by her tissue. According to Brenda, my brother only needed a wife like her to be a huge successful. I’ve had her as my wife and our processions still come with mortgages.

Whatever optimism Brenda had when we were first married has trickled away but she’s still holding onto the idea that either riches or romance could save her. She counts on very little from me so I’m not surprised when she volunteers Vance to help me with the challenge of being D.W.’s executor. Vance is a good brother to Brenda. A bit reckless, but he can get things done.

I think about how a beer would taste right now. The decision of when to pop a top consumes many an afternoon. No worse than Brenda. Give her an afternoon off and she will devour any novel where castles climb into the perfect blue sky. She’s always on the lookout for heroes. I used to be one to her, just as my brother was for me, but heroes fall. D.W. didn’t have to try too hard to charm my wife.

D.W.’s lawyer sets up a meeting along with the instructions to fly out and get an overview on my brother’s estate. I am given three addresses in the Vancouver area, one mainland and two on islands. Brenda can’t get time off work as she’s the main breadwinner now.

“Those are rich neighborhoods.” Brenda thinks she knows real-estate from the ads she worshiped before I lost my job. I can see her mind work. Somehow her grief for D.W. and her disappointment in me morphs into thoughts of an inheritance. Most of her fantasies are too expensive to ever come true but now the house of her retirement dreams is a possibility again. When she brings out my suitcase, I know she’s sanctioned the trip.

I guess I can do without the beer.

“Phone me, Bill. Early in the evening when I’m not too tired to think but also so I have time to unwind before bed.” She packs my suit. “At least D.W. wasn’t traveling. He could have died anywhere in the world.”

“He’s been to Mexico and Arizona.” I correct her.

“Really, Bill? This sibling rivalry is so old.”

It was never a problem between siblings, but Brenda tells her stories her way.

“I’m not totally convinced this trip to his properties is necessary. Sounds like lawyer logic; makes it look like he’s important.” She continues to pack. Underwear. Shaving kit. Shorts and T-shirts.

“Don’t sell anything without checking with me. Plus make darn sure that the claims against the estate are legit.”

At least she hasn’t told me when to shower, but there will be the evening calls for that.

Vance barely says something before it’s done, so within twenty-four hours we are there and with not much effort our cab drops us off at our first address, an RV park. I notice some R.V’s have skirting, and

porches and resident cats. D.W.'s home, #17, is no prize even on a good day - an eight X thirty-five-foot run-down wreck. Brenda's rich real-estate! I take a photo.

Beside us is a waterslide park. The shrieks rise above the booming music and a prevailing odor of popcorn mingles with traffic exhaust. Just beyond the chain link fence a backhoe clangs. Word has it the owners might sell by next year. Nothing will be the same according to the manager, Sophie. The fleshy woman says most of this to Vance, with lowered eyelashes and immature giggles. Vance gives her a lazy smile.

"Nothing ever stays the same."

"Well, the rent is the same. Despite D.W.'s sweetheart rent deal, he was behind two months. I would have cleaned up but I got court instructions to not touch a thing."

Sophie hands over the key. There is a metallic taste in the back of my mouth. I want to get into my brother's home and get this over with. Vance puts the key to the padlock.

"There'll be a lot of red tape to deal with."

There is a lot, all right. Slippery towers of newspapers, garbage bags not tied shut, milk cartons gone sour, and the overpowering smell of mice, which explains the cat that wanted in. There is nothing to do but begin. I turn over a loaf of bread, moldy, hard and accidentally knock something off the counter; a tiny seagull composed of wire and stone. It looks right at home in this sea of trash.

"Can you believe this?" I ask Vance.

"D.W. could have been sick for a while." Vance's tone is neutral. We fall to the work, grateful that the square footage limits the amount of filth. Soon Vance tells me to just dig for papers, any bank records or bills, that sort of thing, and I see his point. Even with the grossness cleared out, no one would live here. D.W. told me one time he was a rolling stone that gathered no moss. Not true. I see green growth rooted in a corner.

Back in the hotel, and even after my shower, I can smell the nastiness. Stifling a sigh, I phone Brenda but she's already talked with Vance.

"A real estate agent could find a cleaning crew. The price tag for a clean-up would be worth it!" she says. "For gosh sakes, Bill. Vancouver suburbs, it has to be worth big bucks. Some help Vance is, telling you to walk away from valuable property."

"Really? Did you not get the picture I sent?" I stop fingering the wire and stone seagull and put it down.

"Quit with those phony pictures. You aren't there for a fun time, Bill."

My throat thickens with the horrors of our "fun". It's a first...but I hang up on her. If I have to explain, I'll claim some malfunction of the phone.

Vance saunters through and points to the burger joint we can see from our window.

Small world, I know, but as we sit down with our meal, the RV park manager appears and joins us. She helps herself to some of Vance's fries and leans close to his arm. He asks if she'd like something to eat or perhaps a coffee. No, she just wants to know how our work is going. Vance ponders a moment.

"So Sophie, do you see any opportunity for us to sell? As is?"

I had mentioned something of the sort myself earlier, but never thought of talking to this woman. She nods knowingly.

"Come over to the office when you're done here. I might be able to help you."

I cringe at the idea, but this invitation seems to exclude me. I wonder what Vance will get out of this. A quick sale of #17? A sexually transmitted disease?

Next morning Vance finishes his hungry man's breakfast, wipes his mouth, and tells me he's booked a time on BC Ferries; we're going to the Island today to the second property. He's rented a car too.

"What about D.W.'s trailer?"

“Sophie’s working on the disposal but it’ll take a few days.”

This new alliance with the RV park manager has set everything into a spin. She knows this world, and she knew my brother, but will D.W.’s estate even cover the clean-up fees? Then what? I picture Brenda with her calculator and her new house dreams collapsing like a house of cards.

“There’s our car.” A vehicle drives into view and before I can ask Vance if we also have a chauffeur, I realize it is the RV park manager. “Sophie’s coming too.” Vance looks sheepish.

The woman proves to be a competent driver familiar with the area. Still, I wish it were just my brother-in-law and me waiting for the ferry. Sophie’s presence makes me feel unpaired. Not that I miss Brenda; thoughts of her tighten my ribcage.

We drive into the belly of the ferry behind a groovy hippy-style van that can be rented for kicks. Do they even know what the movement was about? I try to remember myself. Was free love the promise? As if that is possible. But there was happiness promised. Was my brother happy?

We leave the vehicles behind and make our way up to a deck to sit by the window and watch the water. Sophie buys ice cream cones.

“So did D.W. visit you guys often?” Sophie asks. “He would be gone for months. Then show up like a bad penny. I used to make supper; invite him over. He wasn’t a cook, but he thought I was. Man the conversations we wouldn’t have, he’d bring a bottle of wine and light a candle or two. You would have thought we were the last two people in the world and had to invent a philosophy that fit everything. We had that much to say to each other.”

I wonder when she breathes.

“One time he asked what made me sing. Now I ask people that myself, sort of in his honor. What makes you sing?”

There is silence until we realize she expects

an answer. “Vance?” she prompts, and then turns to me. “Bill?” Neither of us speaks, but Sophie goes ahead.

“You know what made D.W. sing? The same thing that made him cry and the same thing that made him dream. Being alone. What do you think of that?” Again her question floats unanswered and for a moment it looks like she will cry. One quavering deep breath and she grows quiet, to gaze out at the water. Vance rubs the small of her back.

Later Sophie points out a small island we pass, where another of D.W.’s properties is located. I know it as where we will meet the lawyer, but to connect it with my brother is beyond me. I don’t recognize the man Sophie knew.

“What’s there? Another run-down trailer?” I ask. It’s just an address to her, but she does know, more or less, the way to his second property.

“There’s not that many RV parks around. This one is very popular.”

It takes a series of hairpin curves on a steep incline, with a brief view of the ocean and a final descent, and we arrive.

The set-up here is quite a bit better. D.W.’s trailer is still small but newer and not quite as filthy. Vance and I scour for important papers and leave the rest. I pick up a miniature hourglass; the sand inside hushed at the bottom.

At that moment, Sophie sticks her head through the door with an invitation to have drinks at the R.V. office. I detour to the rental car with a few things, when my cell buzzes and I see Brenda’s work number.

“D.W.’s lawyer called. He wanted your cell number but if you ask me, he just wants a reason to bill us for his services.” Her paranoia is without cause or end. “I don’t like it, Bill. D.W. might have trusted him, but you need to shush. Even when people know they should be really careful, a lawyer can make them sing.”

Her words are so at odds with my thoughts

that I can't respond. Sophie said my brother sang. And dreamt. Alone. The thought lingers as I join the others. Someone gives me a beer and asks a question.

"What did D.W. do for a living? We could never figure it out."

I can't answer that. When my brother first left home, he spent some time in a band. After that D.W. avoided the topic, embarrassed we believed, but always quick with the defense that society is shackled to money.

"D.W. didn't ask for much, did he? He could see into your soul though," Sophie says. "He called me a fire lighter; you know, passionate and alive. Then he'd talk about others that drown their flames with dullness. That's what he said; those people could smother you with good sense."

"I guess he meant us." I feel troubled by my own words. "We let him down."

"Oh, no. D.W. never blamed anyone. He just wasn't money-oriented."

These people knew D.W. better than I did. To me he was the brother that my wife found charming and that drove a wedge between us.

The conversation turns to talk about R.V. parks. The mainland site is a little goldmine, so close to the BC Ferry Terminal. Sophie is lucky to work there. Then Sophie compliments the beauty of this location. Soon the R.V. managers discover neither property has a clear future.

"Court orders and lawyers breathing down your neck? You, too? What's going on?"

"All I hear is that we might be sold by this time next year. To settle an estate."

I think to mention Brenda's call to Vance but he is absorbed with Sophie. It isn't long before business is forgotten in the random topics, laughter, and RV park stories. It's the middle of the afternoon. According to Brenda anyone who drinks this early has a problem, but it's hard to pin a problem on

how relaxed I feel. I wander outside, sit on some driftwood and dig my bare toes into the sand. Each wave tells me that I could sing. Or cry. Or dream just a little about how I could have been a better brother. Too late now, the seagulls screech.

The lawyer phones that evening; we will meet at D.W.'s next address. By this time tomorrow, I will have some answers. I shrug away Brenda's warnings, but almost as if she senses my disobedience my phone rings and it is her.

"Quit joking around, Bill. Those are not D.W.'s homes."

I'd sent a second photo.

"Believe what you want." I put the phone on the table so her words no longer reach me. I find the T.V. remote. The stone and wire seagull eyeballs the hourglass perched beside it.

"What's this about?" Vance pauses to turn off the beeping phone then continues to towel his hair. My face is turned to the news, but none of it interrupts my thoughts.

It's Vance's sister that I'm married to and he knows what she's like, but it's me who hasn't faced our difficulties. I need my own brother for this; siblings know what you mean before you can express it completely. D.W. would understand if I told him that my life resembles the interior of his trailer #17.

The next day Vance confesses to a hangover, but while I don't feel like myself, I feel strong and easy at the same time. No hangover from the drinking and Brenda only a speck on the horizon of my thoughts. I'm ready for the next leg of our journey.

After our ride on the inter-island ferry, Sophie drives us to the last of D.W.'s properties. Instead of another beat up trailer, this one a split-level on a beach front lot. I'm impressed with the beauty that money can buy, but without a key we have to wait for the lawyer. Eventually a man arrives on foot, dressed in shorts and sandals. We shake hands as he introduces

himself.

“I am D.W.’s lawyer but really, we go back a long ways. Our friendship started with the band. But never mind that. Let’s talk inside, Bill.”

We go into the house while Vance and Sophie head down the beach.

The lawyer begins to talk. Some words I hear, others I do not.

“...we had some failures but eventually fortune smiled on us. When your brother got sick I looked after his share, bought this house for him but he never did live here... encouraged him to get help...a troubled man, your brother.”

“What was wrong with him?” I ask.

“The official diagnosis I don’t know, but personally I’ve wondered about ...a poverty delusion. He seemed convinced that money tainted everything, that only the poor could be happy.”

I understand suddenly how money is money, nothing more. Money can let us fly into the sky, as Brenda believes. Like seagulls fly; but if you know gulls you know they are also compelled to hover at the garbage pile. That’s an unavoidable reality.

The lawyer has my attention again. “End deal, though, is he left everything to you. This property is now yours.” There is a pause. “And 50% of the two RV parks you visited. D.W. might have lived there as a tenant, but he and I own them.”

As I think of how thrilled Brenda will be at this news, a miserable sweat of anger washes over me. My brother’s estate could buy her dream house but my life might as well be made of sand if that happens. Money is a poor comfort when a thing has been spoilt. I think that D.W. knew this. It feels as if his hands have squared my shoulders, like he did when he wanted me to listen.

I look outside but the beach has not turned into a dreamscape as I thought might be. In the distance I see Vance and Sophie hand in hand at the water’s edge. It seems they are

on the cusp of new love; that brief, brilliant illumination of everything I don’t have

This is where life washes ashore. A boat bobs gently on the water, rising up, going down. Seagulls squawk overhead, survey the lifeless litter on the beach and dive to worry over a dead crab. The waves sweep in to collapse a portion of what is left of a child’s sandcastle. I’ll take a picture of that to send to Brenda, maybe get the right angle to show its brokenness silhouetted against the sky.

Contributors

Heather Adam spends most of her spare time writing: whether that be lyrics and soulful chord progressions for her musical project 'Heather May,' or works of fictional prose, or poetry. Most of Heather's inspiration stems from her childhood in the Northern parts of Alberta, where escape from nature and beauty was practically impossible. Currently she is working on a novel and writing songs for her new album "Mark and Me."

Dorothy Bentley has been published in Alberta media and elsewhere mainly as a columnist. More recently, her poetry and short fiction have been published while she continues to hone the craft of novel-writing. Additionally, two of her poems are being published as a children's picture book by Fitzhenry & Whiteside; it is scheduled to be released spring 2019. She is currently a BA student at Ambrose University majoring in English Literature. You can find out more about Dorothy's work at www.dorothybentley.net

Liz Betz is enjoying her retirement pastime of writing short fiction which has been published in a variety of markets. She writes from rural Alberta, Canada. Follow Gher writing blog <http://lizbetz.blogspot.ca> for news of her publications.

Dan Carruthers, a former caribou biologist from the Yukon, lives in Turner Valley. He loves to shoot, read, drive his old truck and write. His work has been featured in several magazines and newspapers. He belongs to the Millarville Writer's group and authored the suspense novel, *Anya Unbound*.

Rita Dirks is Associate Professor of English Literature and founder of the English program at Ambrose. Her research and teaching areas are Literary Theory and Modernism.

Darren Dyck is an Assistant Professor of English at Ambrose University. He researches and writes on Shakespeare's connections to the world of medieval literature and thought, but his teaching interests are far broader and range from C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien to Ancient Myth and Literature to Spiritual Autobiography. He also tweets.

Born in Calgary, **Neil Godfrey** is a retired geophysicist living in Priddis. He did not pick up a paint brush until he was 40 years old. Neil's paintings are loose & impressionistic. He loves the contrast of light & vibrant colours. Neil's motto is: Don't think, just paint.

Nick Kennedy enjoys Hockey, Golf, and making up characters in his free time. He likes making people laugh and does so full time as a youth pastor in Calgary, Alberta.



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Julia MacArthur is a poet and singer-songwriter who enjoys sharing her love for Jesus. She performs at venues around the city and small towns south of Calgary. You may contact her through her website, www.juliarioarmusic.com.

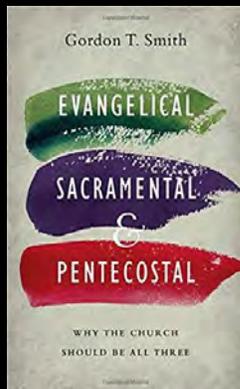
Heather Mack is an English Literature student at Ambrose University in her third year. After graduation, Heather hopes to pursue a career in Social Work. Her goal is to work as a clinical social worker counselling youth who have experienced trauma. She is passionate about people and loves to hear their stories. Heather is a creative writer and an avid reader; if she isn't with a friend (or a stranger) listening to their story, she is off somewhere with her nose in a book: coffee in one hand, and a pen in the other.

Daniel C. Randell is a student of history and business and an avid reader and writer. He is a lover of English literature, and is both an editor and contributor to the Western Talent & Innovation Review. In his spare time, Daniel enjoys playing music and also maintains a history blog.

Erin Emily Ann Vance's work appears in journals such as Contemporary Verse 2 and filling station. She was a 2017 recipient of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Young Artist Prize and a 2018 Finalist for the Alberta Magazine Awards in Fiction. She has work forthcoming in The Occulum, Revue Post, The Black Dog Review and The Blasted Tree. Find her at www.erinvince.ca and @erinemilyann on instagram and twitter.

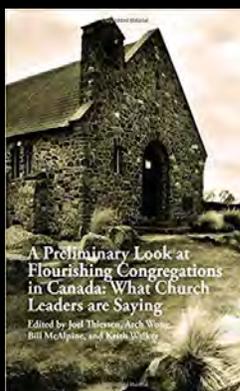
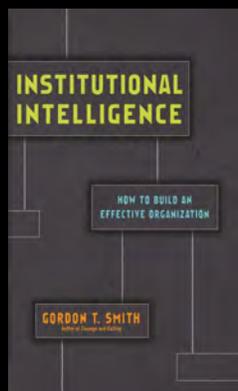
Rachel VanderWoude is an English Literature major at Ambrose University, and hopes to graduate in 2020. She works for the Ambrose Writing Centre as a tutor, runs a magazine of her own, and has a blog (which is updated sporadically at best). Rachel has loved literature and poetry since she was little, and is a voracious reader. Her favourite book is *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. In her spare time, she might be found playing piano or violin, or else up a tree somewhere enjoying nature.

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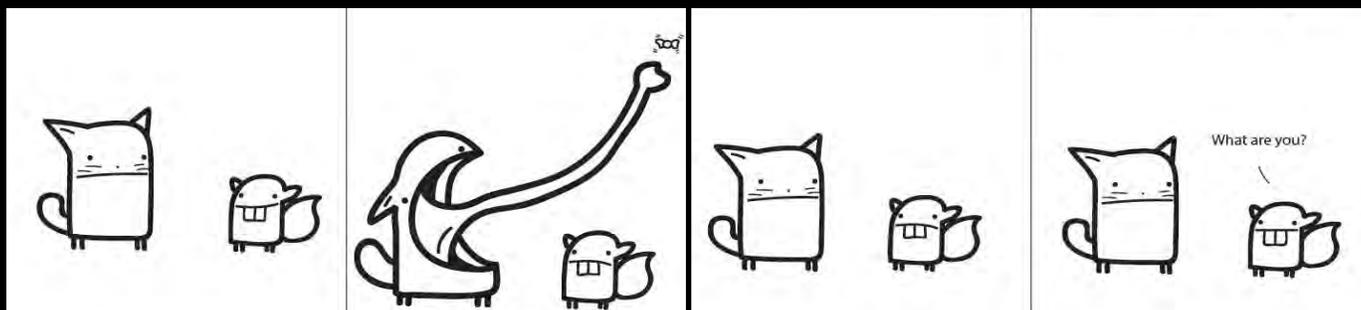
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