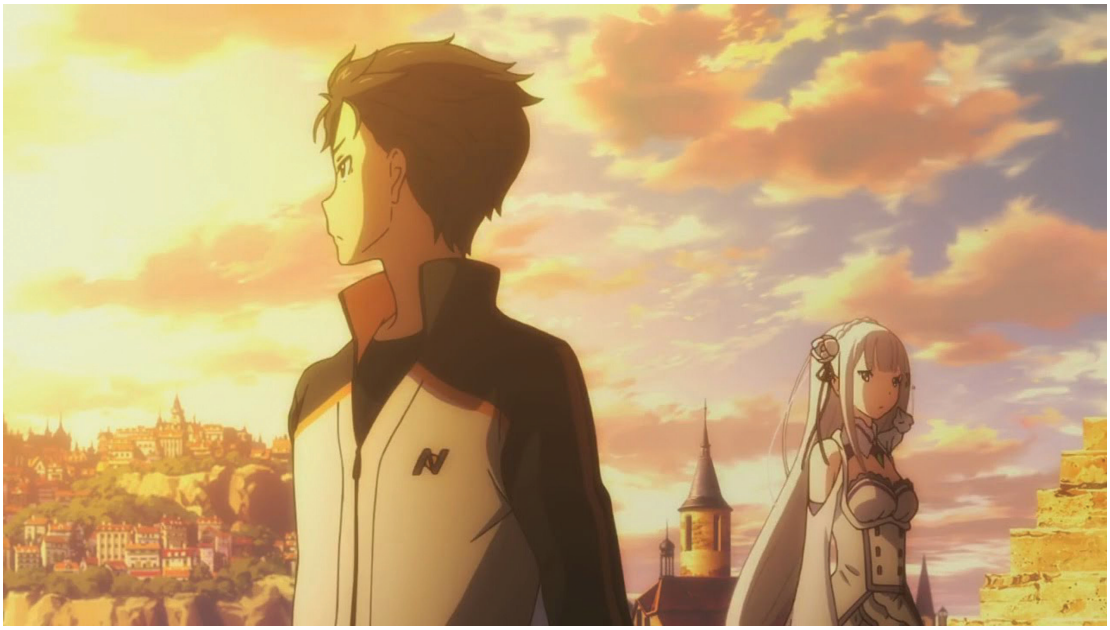
Binge Thinking

Toronto, Canada

Contents

Critical Response



WATANABE, Masaharu . 2016. Re:ZERO -Starting Life in Another World-. [Television still].
Available at : http://www.crunchyroll.com/rezero-starting-life-in-another-world- [accessed 25 November 2016].

What Doesn't Kill You

by Jesse Adigwe

For myself, character development has always been the driver of any video- based medium. For many video works, character development has been either the maker or the breaker of their critical reception. One need only look at the character of Anakin Skywalker in *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* as an example of how poor character development can destroy a film. In the television series *Re: Zero,* directed by Masaharu Watanabe and adapted from the novel series by Tappei Nagatsuki, the character development of Natsuki Subaru is done particularly well, in a way that makes the character feel more real and human than his surroundings.

In particular, the five episodes between episodes thirteen and eighteen show Subaru's mortality and give a gripping insight into how people deal with trauma and how they can lose a sense of who they are when faced with traumatic experiences. And finally, these episodes show how a person dealing with trauma can become stronger with the support of a friend, advisor or confidant.

Re: Zero follows a young man in Japan by the name of Natsuki Subaru who finds himself suddenly and inexplicably thrust into another world, a world in which his death merely results in him being taken back to some point before he had perished, with the points constantly changing. *Re: Zero* shows the character development of Natsuki Subaru in a way that gives us a striking glimpse into the human condition.

Re: Zero follows a familiar trope that has a character lifted from their mundane life and thrust into a fantastical world. What makes *Re: Zero* so unusual is the fact that its protagonist has a reset function. This function allows for a particularly unique form of character development as whenever the main character dies he is taken back to a point before his death; yet he retains all the memories of his life until that point while everyone else is left unaware of the fact that he has died at all.

While Subaru experienced his first death and reset in the very first episode, which resulted in him experiencing extreme trauma, it was not until episode thirteen that he was completely broken. During many of the lives and resets he experienced between episodes thirteen and eighteen, he witnessed his main love interest along with his closest friend perish over and over again in more and more gruesome ways. After witnessing these horrors over and over again, he was eventually mentally broken in episode seventeen and unable to move. By the end of episode eighteen he witnesses his closest friend perish in the most gruesome way so far, causing him to wake from his catatonic state and enter into a state of excruciating pain as he lost all control and screamed before dying again and resetting.

By this time Subaru has all but given up on his current desires and ambitions. This is something that we, the viewers, would never expect to see after watching this defiant and headstrong character for

18 episodes. We have watched a spirit being broken in a way that feels more real and compelling than a fantasized television show should. Natsuki has changed, and we know and understand exactly why. He propositions Rem, his closest friend whom he had previously witnessed perish all those times, to run away with him, to forget about their current quest and his desire to save his love interest that has driven him this far and led to his death so many times.

Rem responds, detailing what their future might look like, and how much she would like that. But near the end, she tells him why that would be impossible; because of who he is, and she reminds him of his dreams, aspirations and spirit. This reassurance acts as the light for Natsuki in the world of darkness in which he had found himself. This reassurance turns all of his pain and suffering into strength and gives him the will to carry on. In these five episodes we see what many of us experience in our own lives, or at least what many of us wish to experience after a traumatic event takes place.

The old phrase "Whatever doesn't kill me makes me stronger" feels particularly ironic here, as it was his many deaths that in the end made him stronger, and *Re: Zero* allows us to have a complete glimpse from the outside into what many of us and our loved ones have experienced at some time, albeit in a much more extreme fashion: being broken down and built back to be stronger than we once were. *Re: Zero* is able to give us a very unique look at character development because we see one character experiencing the most traumatic event possible, over and over again, and no one else knows that he is going through it, which means no one else can comfort him. Subaru needed to hear what Rem said, as it was this comfort that he had desired from his first death.

Our ability to come through traumatic events and situations often comes from our ability to open up and allow people to comfort us. In a situation where that was not possible, it was only natural that a person might have their spirit broken. *Re: Zero* does even more than it was trying to do by showing us what might happen if we were to experience traumatic events over and over again and be unable to tell anyone about it. Such a concept is one that I have never seen explored in this way, and it truly made me question our ability to come through darkness and enter into light.

Whether or not this was the author and director's intended goal is unclear, but in their work they have given us a unique glimpse into the human condition, and moreover, awareness of how much we really need each other. Natsuki's character and spirit is undoubtedly extraordinary, but even the most extraordinary of spirits has a breaking point and is in need of mending from outside sources.

Type: TV
Episodes: 25
Status: Finished Airing
Aired:
Premiered: Spring 2016
Broadcast: Mondays at 01:05 (JST)
Producers: TV Tokyo, Media Factory, Kadokawa Shoten, AT-X, Memory-Tech, Hakuhodo DY Music & Pictures
Licensors: None found, add some
Studios: White Fox
Source: Light novel
Genres: Psychological, Drama, Thriller, Fantasy
Duration: 25 min. per ep.
Rating: R - 17+ (violence & profanity)

Capturing History Through Photographic Moments

by Chante Barnwell

In the film, *Remembrance of Things to Come,* Chris Marker and Yannick Bellon grapple with the visible and invisible aspects of Denise Bellon's life and photographic practice. They capture the life and artistic expression of the French photographer through an outstanding array of her black and white images.

The film constructs its narrative by using her images and historically contextualizing them in "…a unique moment in time when post-war was becoming pre-war,"[1] as Alexandra Stewart narrates during the beginning of the film. Marker frames the beginning and end between the rise and re-emergence of surrealist art: as Stewart mentions, Bellon was "exposed to a secret radiation, (surrealism) that she would al-

Denise Bellon, Baby Carriage Image (Photo credit: Denise Bellon)

The Battleship Potemkin "The Odessa Steps" (Photo credit: Britannica Biography)

ways stay faithful to."[2] This approach creates a compelling narrative commentary on the divide between Bellon's position as a photojournalist and as a photographic artist.

The push and pull in Bellon's biographical depiction and in Marker's film style complements the way I understand their creative approaches. They both possess the distinct ability to condense time and reconstruct history, without compromising the clarity of their intended narrative. I will further discuss the point in which this condensing and reconstructing takes place, by analysing the film's image of a baby carriage disguising film reels during the mention of French cinema and the birth of the cinematheque.

The film, as voiced by Stewart, begins with the international surrealism exhibition of Paris in 1938. Surrealism is defined as the"…effects in art, literature, film, or theater (which are) of unnatural or irrational juxtapositions and combinations."[3] The images presented in this exhibition provided a complex view of the world, created by the surrealist artists of the time. Although the images were alluring, the moment captured by Denise Bellon presented a deeper complexity. This complexity arose because of her use of the apparently everyday to manipulate the viewer. You could argue that it is not every day one sees an image of two people smuggling film reels in a baby carriage, but this information is not on the surface of the image, it takes the narration and cinematic approach of Marker to clarify the embedded meaning.

In the film, the baby carriage photograph is sandwiched between the quick glimpse of a woman posing on a couch with a theatrical glare and an illustrated poster lined with the words "Cinematographe Lumiere."[4] The poster, citing cinematographer Lumiere, advertised the motion picture film camera and the French brothers who were credited as the pioneer manufacturers of photographic equipment.[5] Marker's placement of Bellon's photograph in the film sequence under discussion, demonstrates the foreshadowing of the suppression French film culture underwent in Europe preceding the "German occupation."[6] This suppression occurred both physically and literally in the image and the film, physically, due to the film reel's concealment in the baby carriage and within the montage of images in the film and literally, due to the narrator's ironic commentary on the image, revealing Marker's intentions for the scene.

Marker's emphasis on the theatrics and culture of French cinema overlap with the images. This overlapping merges into one commentary on the pre-war circumstances that caused the film reels to be camouflaged through its transport. Furthermore, during the rise of French Cinema, why did Bellon capture the transporting of film in an unassuming vessel? Stewart addresses this question when she narrates, "The true feeling of pre-war France is found in its cinema, never to be seen again."[7] The idea of the visible and invisible is supported by the image's innocence, validating the viewer's eye, while simultaneously condensing the history of both French cinema and the "German occupation" [8] from which the photograph resulted.

Aside from the photograph's political role in the film, the image itself is one to discuss when determining its effect. The image feels compositionally balanced, the baby carriage and the assumed parents are in the foreground, cushioned by the decorative metal fencing surrounding the streets of Paris in the background. These compositional elements push the idea of fabrication, although the image represents a non-fictional aspect of history. The lighting also suggests the subtlety of the image and does not interfere with the narrative being projected on the viewer. Overall, the image alone seems to provide a good documentary example of French life, separate from its integration within the film.

Concerning symbolism, the photograph contains many metaphors and meanings. The baby carriage symbolizes the infancy of a new worldview, due to the coming of the Second World War. The image also references the anticipation and intended growth of Denise Bellon as a female voice in the world of photojournalism and documentary photography. Finally, the image references the film title the *Remembrance of Things to Come,* because we cannot determine things to come as we age but we hope the young remember the past as they grow to make better decisions for the future.

Marker's use of narration captures the historical context of Bellon's image and this is evident when Stewart states, "it's amusing to imagine *The Battleship Potemkin* on board this vehicle."[9] The Battleship Potemkin is a 1920s silent Soviet Union film, directed by Sergey M. Eisenstein.[10] In the Britannica Online Encyclopedia, the film is "… based on the mutiny of Russian sailors against their

tyrannical superiors aboard the battleship Potemkin during the Revolution of 1905."[11] The narrator makes this remark because it stands as an ironic double meaning and film trope.

In film, a trope is defined as "an image used in a new and different way in order to create an artistic effect."[12] Marker's decision to use the baby carriage as a film trope re-emphasizes its use as a method of distraction throughout film history. In addition, the Battleship Potemkin was the first silent movie in film history to use the imagery of the baby carriage as a means to create alternative meaning.

Returning to the discussion of irony, the quote has a dual meaning because there is no way the battleship Potemkin could fit on the baby carriage (although the film might), but like the battleship, the baby carriage is a vessel of political importance with the views of French cinema in its sails. In addition, there is an underlying humor to Markers choice of words. This is evident with the use of "amused"[13] in the narration as well as the direct relation to the irrationality of surrealism, which is emphasized in this scenes description. This irrationality directs the viewer to personify film reels and contextualize them with relation to human fragility. The baby carriage embodies imagery beyond its imagined function as a vessel for transporting human life but more a vessel for transporting French cultural ideals and creativity, therefore going beyond its role as a creative medium. This role reversal demonstrates the humorous tone in Markers irony.

In the *Odessa Steps* scene from Eisenstein's film Battleship Potemkin, soldiers suddenly descend on a large crowd of people. We become witness to the domino effect of fleeing victims falling to the soldier's rapid gunfire. Suddenly, a baby carriage appears descending down the crowded staircase. This moment in the scene is filled with hope and distress because of the uncertainty of the innocent child's life. The viewer is held in suspense until the baby is slaughtered in one flashing sweep by a soldier's sword. The brutal ending becomes a commentary on the duality of war. Marker uses the irony of his narration to present the parallel narratives within the commotion of war that Bellon baby carriage image also represents.

The *Odessa Steps* scene combines a sequence of movement, sound and rapid flashes of imagery to express emotion. Film director Roger Corman echoes the use of techniques to create emotion; he states, "The scene is comprised of movement through different camera angles and editing techniques which brings great emotion and excitement to the movement."[14] He goes on to say that, Eisenstein uses three elements of film to achieve this, the "traditional longshot"[15] which is used to establish the "geography"[16] of the staircase.[17] "Intercuts"[18] with "medium shots"[19] of the crowds running and lastly "close-up's"[20] used on the screaming faces, to emphasize anguish. These aspects of Eisenstein's approach were significantly influential to the way Marker and other filmmakers throughout history have approached the sequencing of imagery.

In conclusion, the film offers us a lasting impression of documentary photography and the life of Denise Bellon. Chris Marker teaches us not only to value the photograph but also to look at its deeper complexity in relation to film. In addition, we are cautioned not to take a documentary image at face value but to understand the history that is associated with the image and how this subsequently, changes our perception.

Critical Review of the Video Essay "WHY IS CINEMA: Parody" by Cameron Carpenter

by Beatriz Campos

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man, in possession of a good movie, must be in want of a video essay. Who are we as viewers if not chasers of the real meaning behind a scene, without our day-to-day biases and previous cultural knowledge? It is the duty of the film critic, student or teacher to squeeze out every frame's symbology for the eager audience to be able to grasp what is real art.

This is the hard work that video essay creators present to an unaware public via the internet, and Cameron Carpenter is one of these video essayists. In a series of well-crafted visual essays (that even broke college film students can watch), he manages to dig into the depths of cinematic meaning. In his video "WHY IS CINEMA: Parody" he goes back to the beginning of film history itself to explain how we started as cinema-eating-popcorn monkeys and evolved to antisocial YouTube users. Starting with the first viewing of a French film remake by an American director—a recurring event in the media - we see parody films in their essence: silly re-presentations of more serious works.

Trading originality for reference and double meaning, as a way of seeming artistically superior, parody directors presented themselves as a film critic inside a film (nowadays known as a self-aware character that breaks the fourth wall, as in "House of Cards"). Pointing out tropes, pocket references and technical artistry that were used by an unknown director in an unknown part of the globe [that you should have seen because it was shown at Cannes].

Taken over by the "High Brow Squad", parody then became a way for the pretentious directors that had no style to become important, thus, intensifying the war between art and entertainment, that can only result in high priced tickets and VOD distribution systems. However, the parody genre would see its first down low in the 90's.

Contrary to the decade before, where Carpenter accurately points out that there was *Who's Your Caddy* (1980) and *Rock of Ages* (1984), the nineties would have trouble tackling the noble art of copying art directors' styles and making money from it. Mainly because there were no creative movies being made that could be ripped off. One of the biggest fails of the era, *Zodiac* (1999), seems to not yet have landed, which resulted in articles about its real meaning until even now. Maybe Carpenter citing this memorable failure is a foreshowing of a future video.

When *Power Booth: An International Man* (1997) reignited the genre, it was far too late for Hollywood: the internet had come to take its place. This is where I diverge in some way from Carpenter's opinion. Yes, the unknown *auteurs* would come to rely upon the internet; an example might be Rebecca Black and her picture of the white, American middle class in her hit *Friday* (2011). However, he bluntly ignores the filmmakers that decided to enter the realm of parody after a long career of art films, directors such as Woody Allen and James Cameron. [The latter is clearly making a parody of himself film after film, testing the spectator to see how many times he can manage to get people to see the same movie again with different actors.]

If Carpenter had acknowledged these filmmakers in his video essay, it would have been an easy step to bring up his next topic of iconography and parody. If the parody in the old days had to give the original, from which they were copying storyline, aesthetics or imagery, time to be digested by the public, the internet ignored the whole process. We now have instant parodies and a will to comment "first" on every YouTube video because we are used to receiving memes, auto tunes remixes, reaction videos and whatever more the internet has blessed humanity with, faster than Woody Allen can produce his movies.

Carpenter seems to want us to think that cinema parody has since then been killed by the internet. With a traditional, open question, he leaves the viewers to ask themselves if they do or do not agree with him (but as we already covered in the first paragraph, nobody can infer meaning without a critic's help, so this question is just a matter of providing a little more confusion to our minds). However, he is just deflecting from the real question he has given us with this video essay.

Do we have to know the source material to understand a joke, or are video essays here to explain why we should laugh at the signal?

Watch the video essay at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsJc8lQRk30

Sensitive Skin: Soaking Up Mark Hartman's Coney Island Portrait Series, *Island*

by Sarah Claydon

Mark Hartman's recent photographic series of Coney Island, which has duly received a lot of attention from prestigious publications like *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times,* stands out in the genre of beach portraiture because of its sincere and nuanced treatment of its subjects.

Martin Parr and Rineke Dijkstra often come to mind when referencing beach portraiture, and both offer one-track points of view towards their subjects. Parr takes a humorous approach, while Dijkstra focuses on the form of her subjects' bodies, the details, while positioning the camera at a significant distance. In both cases, the portraits seem to operate as pieces of a greater series, rather than offering direct insight into their subjects.

Lisette Model's *Coney Island Bather* stands as a perfect example of the opposite approach. The joyful personality of Model's subject radiates from this image. The candid nature of the photograph, with the bather gesturing playfully beyond the frame, offers a more trustworthy and accessible image than Dijsktra's or Parr's.

Another key dimension that contributes to the seeming authenticity of this photograph is the non-stereotypical body type of its subject. In reality, most people on the beach don't look like the models featured in the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit edition. Those conventional forms, widely perpetuated in beach portraiture, do not reflect the average American; they do not communicate a sense of truth, which in turn compromises their emotional appeal.

Like Model, Hartman captures a portrait of a larger-bodied woman at Coney Island which registers on a profoundly honest level. The subject looking directly into the lens, but her body language and blasé expression suggests she was caught off guard or really doesn't care about being photographed. Either way, the viewer feels as though they've interrupted a routine moment; the subject looks at home on the beach.

What distinctly sets Hartman's 2016 bather apart from Model's in 1939 is the ethnic ambiguity of Hartman's subject. The Instagram feed beneath his photo is crowded with comments trying to determine the nationality of this woman. Given the demographics of the 1930s, it makes sense that Model's beachside photographs would primarily feature white subjects. One has only to look at Weegee's 1940 photo of Coney Island, which has hundreds in frame yet only a couple of visible minorities, to see the difference from today's ethnic landscape. Whites represented 95.08 percent of New York's population in 1930, relative to 44 percent in 2010, which is down from 52.26 per cent in 1990.[1]

Hartman's emphasis on foregrounding difference is one of the most captivating and subversive aspects of his series. Multi-cultural diversity, ethnic diversity, cross-generational representation, and non-normative gender identities are all expressed in this collection. Other photographers have echoed the changing face of America in their beach photography—Wayne Lawrence's 2013 series *Orchard Beach: The Bronx Riviera* being a prominent example—but no one seems to have captured this difference with the same sentimentality and elegance as Hartman. Lawrence's depiction of black Americans in particularly dignified poses is striking, but his overt use of artificial lighting and standardized framing suspends belief. In contrast, Hartman's use of natural light registers his photographs as documents, each composed differently to emphasize the detail or gesture that best accentuates the subject.

Most pictures from Hartman's series feature close-ups of turbans, dreadlocks, scars, braids, white hair, blue hair, afros, piercings, black skin, brown skin, aged skin, tattoos, bodies – or a combination of the like. It's refreshing to see a series that foregrounds the beauty in details of diversity for any portrait genre. The implication is to look beyond the minority statuses of these diverse subjects and see them *as individuals*, each with their own story.

With the recent international movement to ban burkinis on the beach, and the ramping up of other Islamaphobic, racist and hateful rhetoric in the United States and the world at large, Hartman's curious, sensitive – *human* – approach to his series is particularly striking and important. In Hartman's view, the focus should not be on what sets us apart from others, but rather, what makes us all unique.

Untitled, Mark Hartman, 2016, (markhartmanphoto.com)

In the lame 2016 French rom-com remake, *Up for Love,* CGI is employed rather than a shorter leading man

by Talia Eylon

Laurent Tirard's 2016 film *Up for Love (Un homme à la hauteur)* tells the love story between the sweet, ethically minded, and successful lawyer Diane (Virginie Efira) and Alexandre (Jean Dujardin), a kind, wealthy and renowned architect. The premise is plain: a man of short stature and an average-size woman fall in love. This film could have been a refreshing albeit orthodox romantic comedy, as

issues of sizeism are rarely raised in popular cinema. However, Tirard uses computer generated imagery (CGI) to mutate a well-known tall actor, Dujardin, to a 4 foot 5 version of himself. What could have been a rare opportunity to playfully tackle height prejudices, especially as they relate to men, is instead turned into a farce in and of itself.

The film is a remake of Argentinian writer-director Marcos Carnevale's 2013 film *Corazón de león (Heart of Lion)*. There is also a 2015 Columbian remake directed by Emiliano T. Caballero, also titled *Corazón de león*. Inexplicably, all three versions use CGI to transform an average height-to-tall actor to play the 4 foot 5 leading role. These casting decisions all imply that shorter actors could not have played the role as well as a tall actor. This blatant discrimination essentially negates any potential redeeming quality of all three films.

Tirard's version opens with Alexandre calling Diane from her own cell phone, which she had lost earlier that day. They flirt and Alexandre charmingly orchestrates a first date by only offering to return the phone in person over lunch, a coffee, an ice cream, anything so long as Diane agrees. When they meet in person, Diane is momentarily put-off by his small stature but soon after agrees (possibly out of extreme politeness) to a spontaneous tandem skydiving jump. (What woman would say no to the offer of a mysterious outing with a man who has held her phone hostage to get a date?) But along with the accepted norms of this genre, we are required to suspend our disbelief and accept that Diane agrees out of genuine interest and curiosity.

Over a few more dates, their relationship blossoms and they begin to fall in love. The film is not entirely devoid of nuance, as we see Diane's honest struggle with her inner prejudices. She is in love but must decide to broaden her ideal to make room for this relationship. In part, she is conflicted because the issue of Alexandre's short stature occupies the entire relationship, taking up too much emotional space. She feels she must always first be mindful of his experience and only then think of how she is feeling.

Alexandre does not identify as having dwarfism or being a dwarf. He explains that his growth was stunted during his youth due to a gland problem. There is no indication that he suffers from any medical illnesses or complications. He is presented as perfectly healthy and vibrant. The audience assumes that his limbs are proportionate but it is difficult to be certain because of the inconsistencies in the visually grotesque CGI renderings.

Alexandre is a wealthy and successful architect. Yet, aside from a few step stools, his modern house is in no way accommodating to his size. If his home were more suited to his needs, Diane's conflict would have been illustrated visually: she might have felt too large for his living space, as if she had entered a different realm. This would have served to demonstrate the practical differences in their needs and experiences.

Instead, the filmmaker tries to find humor in the physicality of a small body. Alexander hops in and out of every chair with a goofy smile across his face and wildly dangles his feet, which are always at least a foot above the ground. Nearly every time he returns home, the family Saint Bernard topples him over, causing the audience to chuckle. In a party scene with a house full of guests, Alexandre tries to reach a stack of napkins on the top of his kitchen cabinets but "amusingly" is unsuccessful. That none of these moments are at all humorous seems to have escaped Tirard entirely. He may have been counting on allowances of physical comedy or that humor at the expense of a marginalized group is accepted if performed by a member of that group. But even if we wanted to, we cannot laugh at these little people gags because there are no actual people of short stature in the film.

It is unclear why CGI was utilized at all. Was the director fascinated by the technology? If the technology was used in the opposite way—a short female lead was cast, but CGI was used to make her taller—this scenario would have illustrated, at least, a more complex idea. The technology is intriguing in its ability to change bodies. It could mean that anyone could have a new body and play any character. One's physique would no longer be a casting obstacle. Could such technology level the playing field by effectively erasing physical differences? Possibly. But this type of thinking misses the point (and if taken further could reveal itself to be an extension of eugenics). There is no reasonable argument for hiring an average-size actor to play the role of a person of short stature.

The complete lack of self-awareness in the film makes one feel as though he/she have been transported back in time to when using blackface was considered acceptable. How this film was made (three times) in the 21st century is beyond this author's comprehension and should be beyond the comprehension of any audience.

Up for Love (2016)
Directed by Laurent Tirard
Starring Jean Dujardin and Virginie Efira
Unifrance (http://en.unifrance.org/movie/40154/up-for-love)

Marina Abramovic: Powerful, Present & Human

by Tara Hakim

"The hardest thing to do is something that is close to nothing" says Marina Abramovic, and yet that is precisely what transpires at her first major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art - New York in 2010, where she performs for more than 700 hours in her durational piece under the same name of the exhibition: 'The Artist is Present'.

After watching the documentary, about this work, I came to a realisation. The idea is simple. From March 9 until May 31, the length of the exhibition, Abramovic is present. There is one room: in it, a table and two chairs. She invites the audience, one by

one, to sit across from her for as long as they would like and gaze at her, or rather, to receive her gaze. The idea is simple, and yet, as I watched people's reactions, as I watched the encounters unfold on the screen in front of me, I realised how profound it all really was. Everyone who sat in front of Abramovic somehow felt something. Many fell in love with her and many were in tears. But everyone was present, including her. Five minutes into the documentary, I was transfixed, I was present, I fell in love. And so, I wonder. Why? What causes this power? What does Abramovic create that is so magnetic? And why does an idea so simple, almost 'close to nothing,' amount to so much?

The Grandmother of Performance Art

Years before 'The Artist is Present', in the late 1970s, Abramovic began her career in performance art. At the time, she was received very differently: *"You know what is interesting? After forty years of people thinking you're insane and you should be put in a mental hospital, you finally, actually, get all this acknowledgements. It takes such a long time to take you seriously.* Now, she is better known as the 'Grandmother of Performance Art,' having pioneered the use of performance as a form of visual art. For Abramovic, the body has always been both her subject and medium. Some of her earlier work is described as violent and provocative while directly and boldly challenging the audience. *Rhythm 0* in 1974, involved Abramovic standing still for six hours while the audience, with 1 of 72 objects (from a feather to a loaded gun) placed on a table, were invited to do to her whatever they wished. Thus, the audience, spectators, became collaborators, active. In *Rhythm 5,* also in 1974, Abramovic lay down in the centre of a burning wooden star, until her loss of consciousness ended the performance. In this performance, Abramovic involved the audience through a dynamic exchange of energy. In both works, the audience - or the shared experience between the performer and audience - is at the heart of her work.

Does this mean that any performer can create the same space as Abramovic? If another performance artist recreates 'The Artist is Present', will the effect be the same?

"Performance is all about state of mind"

At one point in the documentary, Abramovic likens an artist to a warrior. She says that all artists must have the determination and stamina to conquer new territory, but more importantly, to conquer themselves and their weaknesses. To her, what type of art one creates does not matter, but what is important is one's state of mind when creating. In this sense, Abramovic is a warrior. She explores physical and mental limits at the level of her very being. She has endured exhaustion, pain and danger in a pursuit of emotional and spiritual transformation. "I am only interested in the ideas that become obsessive and make me feel uneasy. The ideas that I'm afraid of." And so, Abramovic attempts to conquer herself and her weaknesses. One question remains: what is her state of mind while performing?

"Time is an illusion. Time only exists when we think about the past and the future. Time doesn't exist in the present here and now."

Over the course of 40 years Abramovic has explored the boundaries of the body and mind, creating works that ritualise the activities of everyday life like sitting, lying and thinking. Now, there exists a "synthesis of all knowledge Marina Abramovic has about performance," The Abramovic Method. It involves a series of exercises developed by Abramovic that heighten one's awareness of physical and mental experience in the present moment.

To prepare for their re-enactments of Abramovic's historical pieces during the MOMA exhibition, Abramovic's first retrospective featuring 5 historical pieces and 'The Artist is Present', 30 young artists completed a three day workshop with Abramovic herself. Abramovic tells them the whole idea is to slow down the body and mind, to empty one's self and be in the present. They go through various exercises, they spend a lot of time alone, they think a lot, they sit a lot - all with the aim of being there, being present. To Abramovic, an emotional approach is what performance needs and when one is present, the emotions appear. The performer and audience share a direct energy, a shared experience. Here lies the importance of the performer's state of mind. "And if you are performing in that way, that you are there, 100%, there's an emotional moment that arrives to everybody, there is no way out, everybody is feeling."

700 Hours, Motionless, Present

The idea behind 'The Artist is Present' is simple, and yet transcendent for many who experienced it.

Everyone who sat in front of Abramovic somehow felt something. After every encounter, Abramovic looks down, almost as if turning a new page, and then back up to meet the eyes of whoever is sitting across from her. For 700 hours, to countless people, Marina Abramovic sat in a wooden chair giving, as she puts it, "unconditional love to complete strangers". Abramovic was present, with every fibre of her body and mind. She slowed everybody's brain down and brought them to the present with her. Thus, their emotions appeared and they felt, just as her emotions appeared and she felt. That is her power. Her presence allowed her to create the intensity of the performance, and that made it transcendent. Again, does this mean that any performer, if present, can create the same space as Abramovic?

I believe not.

What makes Abramovic Abramovic is her fundamentally unchanging approach and faith towards her work. In 1974, her body was both the subject and medium of her work. Her presence was crucial. In 2012, her body was both the subject and medium of her work. Her presence was crucial. Moreover, the exchange of energy between the audience and Abramovic was and is still central to her work. It is this vigilant approach paired with the determination and stamina to continuously conquer new territory, and more importantly, to conquer herself and her weaknesses that allows Abramovic to create the space she creates.

“An Idea of the North”

by Cince Johnston

Last week, I found myself herded from “The Idea of the North” exhibit into the congested Lawren Harris pop-up shop at the AGO. Puzzled, I was left with the gnawing feeling that I had been mislead by the same machinations used by the two weavers in “The Emperor’s New Clothes” - if this exhibit is Canadian High Art at the highest level, why should I feel

Due North, Cince Johnston, 2016

that my expectations were not met or sense that I did not know Harris the artist any better?

Determined to contextualize my uneasy disgruntlement, I returned to my expectations and re-analyzed them wondering aloud why I had them in the first place. Was Harris's work itself a disappointment? No, absolutely not. The subtle tonal range of his Northern palette alongside his depiction of the stark and unforgiving landscape was breathtaking. The simplicity of his compositions had an arresting quality – as if by reducing all the extraneous minutiae of life in his paintings, he had cut to the essentials of human existence. No, Harris did not disappoint.

With the aim to catch the streetcar east somewhere along Queen, I walked southward on McCaul Street, leaving Frank Gehry's impressive glass and wood facades behind me. Mentally retracing my steps through the spaces that marked the exhibit, Idiscovered, rather startlingly, an imbalance in the show which clarified the disconnect between my expectations and my sense of disappointment - only one third had been focused on the Arctic. Two thirds was about Toronto. And an immeasurable sliver was about Halifax.

I arrived at the corner where Queen Street meets University. The afternoon sun is casting long shadows from west to east, and I noted on the glassed wall of the waiting cubicle an advertisement in bold blue letters:

"See the North with Steve"

The mention of "Steve" suddenly alerts me to what I perceived as a new trend of Hollywood personalities trying their curatorial hand: Brooke Shields, Alec Baldwin and now, Steve Martin. Obviously, the big museum corporations are sidling up to these household names as a new means of appealing to a greater public. However, why now? What would be their curatorial voice? Is this a reverse reality TV retaliation? And, what message does this give to those individuals whose working title IS curator?

I return to the mind's eye of my thoughts, reentering "the idea of (the) north" for myself – wondering if "Steve" has ever actually been there? Admittedly, I am being literal, but Toronto is not Our north.

A quote from Glenn Gould greets me at the entrance of the exhibit:

"The north has remained for me a convenient place to dream about, spin tall tales about, and in the end avoid.

My mind proceeds to the first section of the exhibit which is dedicated to the period of Harris's life spent wandering in a part of Toronto called "the Ward". His work mainly depicts houses in broad swaths of bright colours with the occasional human figure or horse and buggy. They are presented in contrast with black and white photos of the same era – photos of forlorn faces and figures in tattered clothes standing destitute in front of low derelict buildings. I note that Harris's colour palette seems more suited for the row houses of Norway or the light of southern France.

A 1920's grid map of Toronto hangs on a wall next to a silent film from the TTC archives – showing a streetcar stuffed with humanity.

I mentally make my way along the walls of the exhibit and arrive suddenly at a portrait of a patron of the Group of Seven, Dr. Salem Bland. Next to it is a modern day photograph (1987)by Anique Jordan of a black congregation in a church.

I had found myself drawn to an elderly woman who had been explaining Harris's style in great detail to a woman several generations younger. I asked her if she felt these two works were meant as transitional pieces, especially as afterwards, Harris's style had become flatter with fewer layers of paint, and his colours more solemn. She was not certain. We fall into dialogue and she tells me that Harris was independently wealthy.

I recall the animated video called "Tin Can Forest" which suddenly punctuates the walls of hanging works. I was not exactly sure of its relevance, other than it depicts Harris in a dreamlike atmosphere, floating like a figure in a Chagall painting. His transcendence?

On a large video screen, the room's compass direction due North, the story of bringing the work of Lawren Harris to a greater public is told. An interview

with Steve Martin demonstrates not only his genuine passion for the work of Harris but points to a meaningful authenticity - he knows art. His description of Harris's work is infectious and eloquent, attributing a soulful quality to Harris's paintings, stating that they possess an otherworldliness where the paintings are almost breathing. He feels the flat, impasto style of Harris has transcended landscape painting in a metaphysical way and that it is truly modern.

I mentally navigate the corner to see Harris's painterly depictions of Canada's far reaches. His canvases do possess an aura - an aura of extremes, of fragility and resilience, of dark and light, all landscaped in unforgiving isolation. I am moved. His process of sketching the landscape and then, taking it home fascinates me – to work in the present from memory.

Amongst the paintings are there are two enlarged black and white photos of the North taken by Harris. I wonder if he kept a written diary?

My internal video wanders into the last segment of the exhibit – the changing face of "the Ward" which is now home to City Hall. A painting by Harris in a completely different style is uncanny in its futuristic likeness of the City Hall. Photos of its current modern state are followed by a series of miscellaneous pieces paying tribute to the various groups which once lived there. It feels like an afterthought. It feels slipshod, disjointed. It feels disconcertingly dutiful.

Now almost at the exit, I discover a placard about Glenn Gould surreptitiously hanging next to a drop box station where visitors can jot down their symbolic notions of the North and tuck them into an unknown eternity. Further on, in a room of dark, I am viscerally greeted by a thundering waterfall displayed on a two-sided screen. Its power is mesmerizing.

My mind returns to the immediate present as the streetcar passes the Toronto City Hall on my left. I recall Harris's painting of it, wondering if this seat of democracy and all the people it reaches, and whether the voice of the media drawing people to the exhibit is not such a bad thing. Does it really matter how people arrive at art? Even Steve Martin candidly admits in the preface of the exhibit catalogue, "this is a time when my celebrity face might actually do the world some good."

The Iceberg in the Room: A Review of *The Idea of North,* The Paintings of Lawren Harris, an exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario, July 1-September 18, 2016

by Kate Latimer

When you hear about a giant iceberg sticking up out of the water, your first thought might not be Lawren Harris and his depictions of the great Canadian North. Nor, perhaps, would you think about the comedian, turned actor, turned banjo player and most recently turned art curator: Steve Martin. Nor would you think about the two of them collaborating (posthumously for one half of the daring

duo) to debunk the notion simmering in the ether that Harris is our great national diplomat; introducing, during his lifetime, his own paintings of the North as a definitive representation of the Canadian landscape. And yet that's exactly what they've done.

As you walk through the exhibit in the Art Gallery of Ontario, starting with Harris' early works— images of houses, often snow-covered and sun-dappled— you begin to get a taste of Harris' appetite for the unblemished: image after beautiful image of cozy Canadian scenes, perhaps of a red house with a yellow sleigh out front, as in the piece titled, *Red House and Yellow Sleigh*. Continue walking toward the later works of Harris and you'll find the iconic images of the Canadian North. It is a sensational experience, the grand scale of the mountains and icebergs, the cool ripple of the water; Harris' empty, vast depictions of our North seem to elevate the landscape to an otherworldly level. The colours are so rich, the images so striking— it is easy to become mesmerized.

Harris grew up in Toronto, and as the exhibition text explains, "it was from this urban perspective that Harris envisioned an idealized Canadian North at the core of national identity." Of his paintings, the text continues: "their power to stand in for our national identity often obscures other voices and perspectives, and continues to shape contemporary understandings of both Canada and the North."

It is complicated when one man's brush takes on the responsibility of constructing a national identity, inevitably a simplistic depiction. But the curators have taken on the challenge of noting the shortcomings of a single perspective speaking for a whole nation, while also celebrating the beautiful works. It's the age-old question, what do we ask of art? Can a painting, a book, a poem, ever truly depict anything other than the artist's unique and singular perspective?

Harris presents a singular idea of The North, idealized and splendid, that of an urban visitor discovering the northern section of his country for the first time. Does the act of documenting bear the responsibility of representation? Who put Harris in charge of authoring our Canadian identity for the rest of the world? It seems that it is the elite clan of art-seekers who have gradually allowed the art to stand in for the real. For many with no firsthand experience of the Canadian North, this work serves as the only insight into an otherwise foreign landscape, and therefore the art transforms into the only reality they know. It seems, through no fault of any individual, that Harris' work has come to represent Canada to national and international audiences.

The Ward section of the exhibition is comprised of grimy images by Canadian journalist John Lorinc, depicting the urbanization of Bay and Yonge St., serving to complicate the viewer's whole understanding of what this exhibit is really about. The black and white photographs standing in stark contrast with Harris' paintings highlight to an unfamiliar audience just how specific Harris' depictions of the North really are. By showing us where Harris grew up, it serves to emphasize his status of "visitor" to the North— his works depicting more than anything, his own awe at the landscape of his country— as if he's shouting to the world, "Look! Look what I found up here!"

When Joseph Boyden's novel *The Orenda* came out, depicting the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada, the response from critics seemed to be the same: what right does Boyden have to tell this story? As it turns out, Boyden's ancestors were Aboriginal, and though he grew up in urban Toronto, he spent his adult life rediscovering the traditions of his family. It became clear to me that there is an unspoken rule about who is allowed to tell what stories. The act of documenting seems to be viewed as an unspoken act of claiming ownership. This exhibit released Harris from this critique, allowing his work to shine.

The Idea of North has its weaknesses: a celebrity whose curatorial fingerprint on this exhibition has distracted many viewers from noticing the ambitious undertakings of the show; a poorly-explained

Toronto section, serving to confuse instead of enlighten viewers when they look for a neat takeaway; and a hokey moment at the end of the exhibit where you too can write down your idea of the North, with projected quotes from previous visitors including: "My dad says the North is cold," written by a five year old.

The Idea of North was never trying to explore what the North means. It was instead trying to illustrate Harris' paintings as representations of a singular idea of the North, allowing the landscape to stay mysterious and unknowable. Beneath all the window dressings there is a thoughtful exhibit that manages to expose the myth of a single artist's perspective of the North representing a nation, while simultaneously celebrating his work.

The Pocket Watch

by Julian Muia

Walking across the front lawn of 13 Ryder Road, I feel overcome with an unbearable sense of melancholy. I initially attribute it to my fear of growing older – the driveway on my immediate right being the very spot where countless afternoons as a child were spent skipping rope with neighbourhood friends. But perhaps it is due to the historical significance of the events unfolding before me.

The last generation of the influential Robson family is leaving the village of Maple, Ontario – my hometown in the York Region city of Vaughan, which they founded nearly one-hundred-and-sixty years ago. Over the years, the Robsons have earned a number of endearing sobriquets: the First Family of Maple, the Maple Kennedys, and my personal favourite, the Vaughan Trapps. Each moniker paints the portrait of a dynasty whose achievements have outlived its name.

A sign pitched in the front yard promotes the sale of the property. Upon noticing it one evening after work, I decided to do a little online research – as all decently curious neighbours would do. Having not set foot in the Robson home in nearly fifteen years, I was surprised to find that it had not changed much. The shag carpet was where it was supposed to be, and the paneled wooden walls still looked spectacularly bland. The images posted to the realtor's website carefully dissect each room in a remarkably insipid manner:

Three bedroom bungalow… 130, 160 and 170 square foot bedrooms… Within walking distance of Canada's Wonderland…

A neatly displayed collection of numbers, measurements, and statistics coldly describes rooms that once housed generations of influential figures. Dissatisfied with this online portrayal, I took note of the open house occurring in two days' time and decided to visit the home in person.

Walking through the front door, a familiar smell of firewood brings me back to my childhood almost instantly. I laugh to myself, recalling the birthdays celebrated with friends and neighbours in the main floor living room. If the realtor's online listing proved just one thing to be true, it is the reassurance that the house indeed looks the same as it always had – neither large nor glamorous. However, what the professionally lit photographs and sterile language fail to capture are the many eccentricities found within the walls of 13 Ryder.

The bungalow is less of a residence and more of a time capsule. Hanging photographs obscure nearly every conceivable inch of wall space. Some, yellowing with age, date back to the late-nineteenth century, documenting the emigration of the English Miller-Robson family to what was then Rupertsville, Ontario. A bearded man in Victorian garb stands in a wheat field surrounded by his twelve children. Typical of photographs from that era, no one is smiling. A boy in the foreground embraces a border collie while squinting at the camera:

James R. Robson Sr. and family, Rupertsville, Ontario, 1887. New plot.

The historical village of Rupertsville was an uninspiring collection of wheat fields and dense forests. Encouraged by the British government to explore agricultural opportunity in the empire's burgeoning North American dominion, many farmers made the trek across the Atlantic to settle in York County, Southern Ontario. Four families purchased and divided the vast majority of the area's farmland – the Watsons, the Nobles, the Ruperts, and our very own Robsons. A map hanging above a shoe rack in the entrance provides a detailed glimpse into land division and concession lines at the turn of the century:

Purpleville, Rupertsville, and Noble's Corner, 1901.

(I am pleasantly surprised to find that the land surrounding my home was once a haven for the native whitetail deer population.)

Moving into the living room, the photographs continue. I ask myself if they have always hung on the walls, or whether I was too young to appreciate or even acknowledge them all those years ago. One photograph depicts a man clad in overalls (with a familiar squint) once again playing with a pack of border collies. Below, a sentence scribbled in black ink tells me that this is James Robson Jr. in 1911, Reeve (Mayor) of Rupertsville from 1908 – 1914. Industry at this point in time was purely agrarian. Few dared to venture up to Rupertsville – the brush was simply too difficult to navigate. It would not be until the 1930s that the area would undergo a drastic transformation, brought upon by James Jr.'s son, Frank.

Locals called him Captain Hook, a sly reference to the prosthesis mounted on his left arm. I don't remember Frank Robson. By the time he passed away in 2001 at the age of 91, he had lived his last few years in a seniors' home, so his lack of visibility transformed him into an almost mythical figure, at least in my eyes. But I certainly knew *of* Frank Robson, having heard second-hand recollections about his many accomplishments. By all accounts, he was a man with a vision.

During the Great Depression, he sought to provide Ontarians with employment opportunities by establishing the Robson & Smith Maple Syrup Company, with his childhood friend, Jim Smith. It was the first large business in Rupertsville; significantly larger than the mom and pop shops that were prominent on Keele Street at the time. Working out of a small log cabin in a forest on his family's land, hundreds of desperate young men travelled north to tap Maple trees for the sugarmaking trade. A portrait above a television set in the living room shows around sixty men in a wooded area smiling and sipping tea in the snow. The cabin is slightly visible to the left of them:

R&S Maple Syrup Company. Second winter. 1932.

To commemorate Frank's new role as a successful entrepreneur, James Robson presented his son with a family heirloom first purchased from a Noble's Corner general store in 1895. It was a gold pocket watch, with a hunter case and accompanying chain. I notice it sitting on a dusty shelf behind a glass case in the living room. Carefully handled, it still functions to this day.

Frank's job-making capabilities did not end with sugarmaking. He sold key plots of land to Superior Propane, built schoolhouses, a sawmill, and established the largest auto-repair garage in York County. His passion for repairing old trucks and tractors was well known around town. A colour photograph dating back to the 1980s shows his restored 1910 Ford Model T, which he called Buckaroo, parked in the backyard of the family home. My father tells me that he would regularly drive the vehicle to community events to entertain children. I can't recall having seen it around town.

The Robson family's efforts proved fruitful. Due to the employment opportunities they offered, Rupertsville experienced rapid population growth during the interwar period. Frank's loyalty and forward-thinking business acumen were admired by his employees and neighbours. The latter is perhaps most evident in his lobbying efforts to bring transit to his little town. Selling off acres of Robson farmland to CN Rail, he envisioned Rupertsville as a centre of agriculture that could provide thousands of Ontarians with work, if only they had the means to travel. CN agreed, and as a black and white photograph in the kitchen hallway shows, the hammering of the final spike was an event attended and celebrated by all in the community. With an accessible train route came another impressive population boom, and the province of Ontario moved to incorporate the bustling community into a village. Like his father before him, Frank Robson was elected Mayor, and thousands rallied to rename the community Robson, Ontario. Deeply humbled by the local support, Frank politely rejected the petition, instead opting to name the new village after the tree variant that was indigenous to the area – Maple.

Footsteps approach from behind me, and a woman wearing a tailored business suit presents herself as the realtor. I recognize her welcoming smile from the website. We shake hands as she predictably launches into a practiced monologue promoting the features of the property. She tells me about the spaciousness of the room we are standing in, her ideas for renovations, and the various measurements and numbers that are intended to define the value of the home.

During the Second World War, Mayor Robson volunteered his family's farm as an armoury for the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers corps. Weapons of destruction were assembled and stored here for use in the fight against the Axis powers. I wonder how many soldiers were killed by machines built on my street, and how many tanks rolled across the yard I later played in as a child. I'm aware it's a morbid train of thought, however few people would ever get the opportunity to entertain it. A photograph of Frank seated atop a tank with three Commonwealth officers hangs near a linen closet – his left side is bandaged. I assume that this photograph was taken immediately after the explosion at the armoury that severed his left arm. Another portrait shows a wartime Mayor Robson in official uniform.

My thinking is interrupted by a high-pitched laugh, which I follow to the master bedroom down the hall. A young couple giggles hysterically while holding hands. They introduce themselves as Leni and Manuel, and they tell me that they are newlyweds who have just moved to Canada from the Philippines. They've been looking for a house for the past two weeks, hoping to move Leni's elderly parents over from Manila within the year.

"This one isn't big enough," they tell me disappointedly. Manuel then asks how long the walk to the Vaughan Mills mall is.

At the close of war in the Pacific theatre, Frank re-

sumed his regular duties as Mayor of Maple. Over the next ten years, he oversaw major housing and infrastructure developments, including the creation of the Maple Airport, the restructuring of the York County School Board, and an influx of big business. For Frank, it must have been a bizarre experience seeing his family's corn and wheat fields grow housing and industry instead. Shortly after the groundbreaking of the Maple Airport in 1955, which is captured in a slightly blurred photograph of Frank in a cockpit with ace WWII aviator Marion Alice Orr, he resigned as Mayor. He wished to devote the entirety of his time to his true passion – environmental and historical preservation.

Frank worried that as the 1960s approached, the suburbanization of Maple was transforming the village into a mere bedroom community for Toronto. With this in mind, he used his political influence to block corporations from clearing acres of forestry for building and land use. He worked tirelessly to establish eight woodlots and community parks to celebrate the beauty of Maple's natural surroundings. These included the popular Ramsey Armitage Park, and a local outdoor skating rink and swimming hole for all to enjoy. His expertise in the field of horticultural studies was recognized throughout the nation. In fact, both the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Federal Forestry commissioned him to design the equipment required to help harvest black spruce and evergreen cones. The resulting tool, the Mechaniconer, developed in 1968, is still used, and its patent provided Frank with a steady source of income for the remainder of his life. Encased behind a large glass cabinet, the original device sits in the corner of a basement shelf, rusted into a deep red from decades of overuse.

Aside from his entrepreneurship, activism, politics, and innovation, there was also a philanthropic side to Frank Robson. He was the founding member of the Maple Lions Club, which continues to organize charitable hayrides, barbecues, and festivities to this day, including their popular Thanksgiving Turkey shoot. In the basement study, photographs and newspaper clippings of many of these Turkey shoots adorn the walls, and can you believe it? I recognize my mother and father!

Frank, Marion [Frank's wife], *Domenic and Mary-Jane Muia, Thanksgiving, 1985.*

It must have been right after my parents moved to Maple from North York. An Italian-Canadian Roman Catholic couple in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon Presbyterian neighbourhood, they were frequently ridiculed and excluded by the community at large. All except for Frank. He took a liking to my parents, invited them to family dinners, and helped them renovate their home. My father often tells the story of when he returned from work one day to find that a rotten tree in our front yard had been chopped down by Captain Hook single-handedly – and I mean that in the most literal sense of the expression. He was warm and welcoming, and a true advocate of small-town cultural diversity. My parents still haven't forgotten his kindness.

But the two accomplishments he was most proud of were the creation of the Kortright Centre, and Maplefest. The former is a provincial conservation area along the Humber River that is home to deer, foxes, rare birds, vegetation, and kilometers of hiking trails. The park was developed from a vast plot of land used by the Robson family as a local summer retreat. Looking back on the fond memories I associate with the park, I can't help but be thankful that such a beautiful area has remained untouched. Pictures of the park's ribbon cutting ceremony are framed next to a fishing paddle mounted on the wall. The moustached Dr. Francis Kortright is immediately recognizable in the photographs, but they beg the question, why were no major projects ever named in Frank Robson's honour? After all, if you take into consideration all of the land he donated over the years, you would think that he would receive some sort of recognition. Was he overlooked, or perhaps just selfless, preferring to watch from the sidelines as close friends accepted the accolades?

Despite the lack of acknowledgement, his ideas were widely embraced. Maplefest, a popular annual three-day summer carnival, was the physical embodiment of Frank's spirit. Behind the Maple Community Centre, musicians, vendors, and citizens of all ages would congregate to celebrate the village's esteemed heritage. Officially designated by Mayor Lorna Jackson (for whom Frank was a senior policy advisor), the festival was meant to preserve Maple's culture, which he felt was being lost due to the town's geographical proximity to Toronto. Photographs hanging next to Frank's three Citizen of the Year awards show grinning children on bounc-

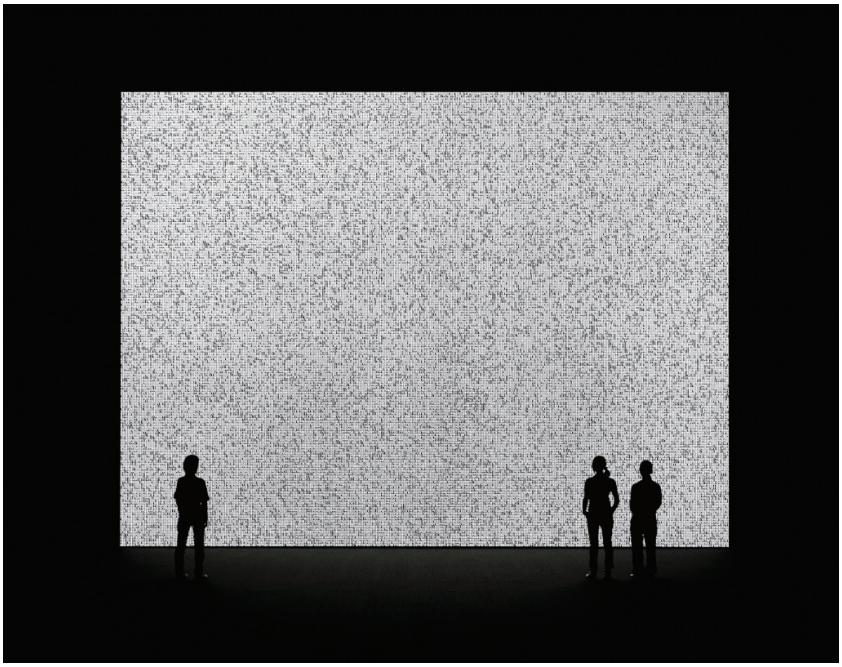
ing castles and rollercoasters, and seniors in wheelchairs knitting. I laugh when I notice that both demographics are toothless. These colour photographs, taken in my birth year of 1994, appear to be the most recent photographs hanging in the home.

It all ended shortly thereafter. Frank Robson quietly passed away in 2001 – few noticed. Maple, now part of the city of Vaughan, moved on without him, disregarding its roots in favour of commercialization. I wonder if the organization of community rests upon the tireless efforts of a single individual; the facts, after all, speak for themselves. Maplefest trudged on for a few more years, before finally being scrapped due to a lack of community support.

Today, little remains of the Robson family's legacy. No monuments have been dedicated, statues erected, or names memorialized. All that continues to stand is the abandoned log cabin belonging to the Robson & Smith Maple Syrup Company. Tucked away in the middle of an overgrown forest, it is a frequent target for vandals. Maple eventually became the suburban bedroom community Frank worked so hard to prevent it from becoming – a place where nine-to-fivers sleep and catch up on ball games and soap operas.

Walking up the creaking basement staircase, I find the main floor filled with potential buyers. One couple is Iraqi; another is of Italian descent. Will they too gaze upon these hanging portals into the past with curiosity? Perhaps if they look hard enough, they will see themselves. I walk out the front door, cross the street, and return to the place I have called home for the last twenty-two years. Looking back at 13 Ryder, I realize that I have lived across from a great mausoleum all my life, and yet I also was ignorant of the history that surrounded me. Considering the recent real estate trend occurring in Maple, the next buyer will most likely tear the bungalow down, opting instead to erect another cookie-cutter mini-mansion. Reflecting on the open house, I am reminded of that family heirloom – a gold pocket watch, which continues to tick away on a dusty shelf in a dimly lit room. Time moves forward, despite all else.

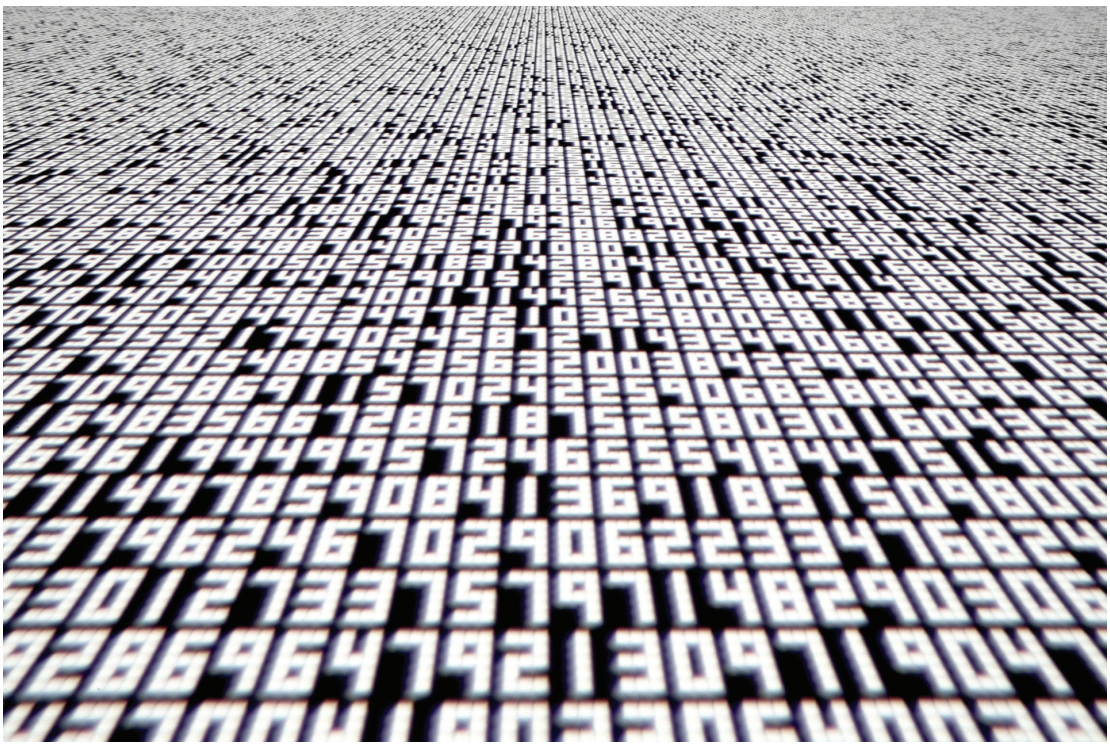
The information found within this story was gathered from a series of personal interviews conducted with Brenda Herring, daughter of Frank Robson.



data.tron, Ryoji Ikeda, 2007. Photo: Ryuichi Maruo.
Courtesy of Yamaguchi Centre for Art and Media

The Infinite in the Infinitesimal

by Chrys Vilvang



data.tron, Ryoji Ikeda, 2007. Photo: Ryuichi Maruo.
Courtesy of Yamaguchi Centre for Art and Media

Ryoji Ikeda's *data.tron,* on display at the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal from May 19 until October 20, 2016, confronts us with the reality that we are eerily unfamiliar with the language we now depend upon to communicate with one another. Ikeda's work has concerned itself with the notion that in the digital age nearly all information is encoded as numerical data; therefore what we experience, as audiovisual media or otherwise, is also the concealment of the arrangements and structures of code that enable these modern technologies.

As part of the larger *datamatics* series, which includes, but is not limited to audiovisual concerts, CD releases, and publications, *data.tron* takes the form of an immersive installation wherein a massive projection of various coded data sets consumes an entire wall of the gallery space. The projector serves as the only light source within the dark surfaces of the room, with the lone white wall onto which it is pointed towering brightly over viewers.

In a continuous 6-minute loop, the projection alternates between three unique visualizations of encoded data, representing computer crashes, DNA sequencing, and transcendental numbers. Audiences become immersed in the traditionally invisible processes of data transmission as the numbers fleetingly materialize across the projection. This sense of immersion is intensified by the percussive and occasionally strident soundtrack, which mimics the familiar sounds of digital technologies at work.

The emptiness and the darkness of the viewing environment serve to direct all attention towards the projection surface, though it would be difficult to qualify this as a purely cinematic experience. While immersed in the installation viewers are preoccupied with the sense that they are somewhere they should not be; seeing something they should not see, and hearing something they should not hear. There lingers a faint suspicion that what they are experiencing may in fact be a technical difficulty rather than the work as the artist intended.

Viewers cannot help but feel as though the coded data on the screen is in some sense the forbidden internal structure of the failing machine, unwittingly projecting the exposed source of digital information rather than the decoded translations to which we are accustomed. Rare encounters with the raw code that enables our interactions with digital media is usually cause for alarm as in the case of the computer crash, yet we must also marvel at the complexity and beauty of information presented in ways we as humans cannot adequately perceive or process.

Ikeda's history as a sound artist has often been concerned with exploring various 'raw' states of audio, and he occasionally employs frequencies that lie on the outer limits of the human hearing range. Just as a sound on the fringe of perception may only become known to the listener once it is made absent, one must consider how the code that underlies digital visual media is also operating in a covert manner, only to become visible in the absence of the proper decoding technology. *data.tron* as an audiovisual installation is in many ways the continuation of this theme, as coded data is essentially the raw materi-

al of digital information being presented in its pure form. The *datamatics* series thus becomes the further expansion of these ideas across the senses.

The underlying code required to support all digital information is the imperceptible specter always present in our encounters. In making this visible, viewers are at once invited to search for meaning in the flashing numbers as they appear and disappear, while simultaneously being forced to acknowledge the impossibility of this task. The compulsion to search for this meaning gradually subsides, replaced by a sense of awe at the sheer magnitude of information being presented and bewilderment at our utter incomprehension. The arrhythmic beeping of the data as it is processed and transmitted becomes the uncanny pulse of the digital machine as its skeletal structure is exposed to the onlooker in nearly voyeuristic fashion.

As the world continues to discard outdated forms of media, Ikeda's *data.tron* serves as a mesmerizing reminder that the encoded forms of information on which we have become dependent are hardly accessible to us without the necessary technologies for their translation. By embracing the relative ease of the surface products offered through digital media, we are ignoring the imperceptible yet ever-present structures that support them. The hopeless complexity associated with organizing and preserving the media of the analog world has been challenged by the development of digital media. Ikeda's work begs the question: what are the consequences of a world now organized according to the infinite and infinitesimal space between 0 and 1?

“Have You Changed?”

by Jeremie Warshafsky

“YOU’VE CHANGED”, a work by artist Jesse Harris at 1075 Queen St. West, is a fundamentally social work, internalizing and eloquently encapsulating the transformation of self and place. While the piece no doubt intends to comment on the rapid shift in the area’s urban landscape—one that has arguably seen unprecedented change in the city—it illustrates a larger, more complex concern

regarding the rapid growth of Toronto as a whole. It's no secret that as the city expands, neighborhoods shift and the more desirable ones ultimately eject their at-risk inhabitants (see Regent Park), inviting new demographics into a region previously "off-limits". Whether this is good or bad is a matter of perspective: the individuals the piece was intended for might no longer live in the area, and a new set of parameters, established by new inhabitants, might well anticipate a new interpretation of the piece.

There is an element of playfulness here. You *have* changed, and every time you look at it, the piece itself has changed. The words might have faded, or the brick underneath chipped to reveal a red sore in the middle of the "'," while you no doubt have moved on from the individual you were at the moment of a previous encounter. As if trapped in a never-ending cycle of re-interpretations one could become "mentally ill", questioning if the work's proximity to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) was an ironic afterthought as opposed to an established relationship long before the work existed. There are always patients present to see the work, which is half-heartedly meant to inject them with a positive attitude contrasted with the shifting world around them. Can the new locals grasp the concept that a change has happened even though they have no notion of the past? By that reasoning, has the area even changed for them?

Graffiti is an aggressive art by nature, hijacking space and inserting itself into the psyche. "YOU'VE CHANGED" is hard to avoid due to its height, and can be seen from many blocks away. But as you step closer it begins to loom over you. The line of questioning you take yourself down is infinite, and possibly irrelevant, but the sense of guilt that follows is inevitable. You are thrust into a self-interrogation: Have I changed? What about me changed? Is change bad? The answers don't come readily, but an indication of your role in this change begins to materialize.

What began as an art form rooted in social and political ideals in minority, and often subjugated groups, has strained to remain that way but inevitably grown to include more mainstream works. Modern graffiti, beginning with simple name tagging, dates back to the 1960's, while the more established form we know today (bubble letters, iconography etc.), stems from the subway and hip-hop culture of New York City in the 1980's. Often overlooked is the fact that graffiti is illicit, a limitation constraining it to evolve into its current form. In the documentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, the famous graffiti artist Banksy comments on the highly popularized art and vapid celebrity that has emerged in the contemporary world. He uses Mr. Brainwash as a prime example, someone who makes 'art' that people like but which ultimately falls short in capturing the essential ideals and expressions of the medium. In Toronto especially, street murals have replaced our idea of graffiti. Condoned by the city, these murals assumed to be graffiti are a far cry from the intent of the medium. "YOU'VE CHANGED", emerges from Spectrum Art Projects, a non-profit organization attempting to beautify and inject the city with a bit of art. Understanding limitations allows an artist to work around and within them, integrating those ideas into the artwork being created. To question the purity of its origin against the Queen St. West backdrop poses questions about race and economics that are routinely disregarded.

Public art is rooted in social engagement, and by commenting on a range of issues on varying social levels of urban geography, demographics, art, economics, and politics, "YOU'VE CHANGED" highlights the viewer's personal interaction with these issues. It also questions its own existence by questioning the ambiguity of change itself and its place among the social transformation of the city.

Photo credit: Eli Weinburg

Article from the New York Times Magazine 09/04/16 Title – The Greatest historical photographs often contain a glint of magic, a mystery that can never be fully unravelled.

by Peter Watson

There are some images that hold onto secrets just long enough to consign them to the who-dunit, or perhaps more importantly, why-dunit section of the bookshop.

Geoff Dyer's article, *The Greatest historical photographs often contain a glint of magic, a mystery that can never be fully unravelled*, published in the New York Magazine on 09/04/16, teases us to follow the trail for the identity of a white child surrounded by black South African protesters. There are clues within the 1956 photograph, but like all good enigmas, the ones in plain sight are the most challenging to decipher. Dyer reveals a story surrounded by a story and demonstrates through one old black and white image why we should question more thoroughly what we first perceive as the truth. This could be mistaken for the plot line of his latest best-selling novel. Instead, this is Dyer's other passion, the very nature of photography.

As we later ascertain the white child is in fact the son of the photographer. A communist, and sympathetic to the anti-apartheid movement, he wished to make a political statement. Dyer then enlightens us how the child was deaf from a young age. Now armed with these facts, surely we view the image differently? We have the privilege of hindsight of history, and now evidence of the photographer's motives. So we look at it compassionately we have been fooled but are supportive of the photographer's actions. The betrayal seems just, but the photo takes on a secondary level of meaning.

Dyer claims these facts change nothing about the photograph, but I would question that. Something has changed the mood of the image, it is evolving before my eyes. The deaf child who doesn't hear the cry for change in 1950's South Africa has unknowingly become a political pawn. I start to imagine how the photographer went about placing his son in amongst the protesters.

Did he struggle to understand what his father's vision was; could he use sign language or lip-read? He gives the impression of being uncomfortable in the photo so maybe he was shy and withdrawn. I wonder if after being placed there and watching his father retreat to his camera position, did he, being confused and nervous, follow him? Was the child replaced in the spot a second or third time? Was he positioned with his father's hands on either shoulder and a stern finger pointed at him for a command to stay put? Just how willing a pawn was he? All of the protesters are wearing coats, so the day must have been cold, but child is in shorts and a sleeveless shirt. Surely he arrived at the protest with a coat on? I now wonder if the father thought to remove his son's coat to show more of his white skin for increased drama. Is the uncomfortable stance of the child, which Dyer points out, simply him starting to become cold?

If I am right about any of these facts, the photograph is now transforming into an image of child abuse. Of course this all conjecture on my part, but it's been fuelled by the knowledge that the image was staged. I viewed it differently earlier; I'm now reacting to it with suspicion. I've searched the photo for clues and only found unanswerable questions.

Photographs such as these are in some respects a sub-genre of documentary, and have been used to make political statements before as well as after the South African protesters image was taken. They've fooled the public and they've also fooled the media. In fact, the New York Times was duped during the 2004 U.S elections when they unknowingly published a faked photograph of John Kerry and Jane Fonda together at an anti-Vietnam war rally. The pair were never at the same event. Josef Stalin routinely had people eradicated from photographs who had dared to disagree with him and the famous image of Mussolini who was pictured on horseback waving a sword had the man steadying the reins erased from the image to make Mussolini appear braver and in control.

Recently, this year, the Magnum photographer Steve McCurry was accused of tampering with his images. He added and removed objects to improve com-

Steve McCurry's original image.

Steve McCurry's altered image.

position and form. In one photograph he removed a lamppost from the background and in another a boy is eliminated from a larger group of children. Other lesser-known photographers in the past have been fired for similar practises. Yet somehow Steve McCurry's actions concern me less. Claiming he's not a photojournalist but an artist as justification for his conduct appears cowardly. I would respect him more if his stance were along the lines of "my changes are not trying to rewrite history but improve viewing pleasure". Of course the practitioner should be transparent as possible with their work. But I'm not expecting a disclaimer on entering a gallery that every grain or pixel of these images remains untouched by a human or computer alike. It would be naive to think that photographers are not "playing" with their images, but this is certainly not staging.

I recently attended an event hosted by the "World Press Photo" agency. The guest speaker, who also over oversees the awards and rules of the entries, spoke about how for the first time this year a code of ethics had been established. They now had a set of rules on what was considered manipulation of an image. There were many unacceptable procedures, and among them where:

- The removal of physical marks on a body.
- The removal of small objects in the picture.
- The removal of shadows.
- The adding of items to a photo
- No photo montage

However, cropping the image was acceptable and changing an image from colour to black and white was also appropriate. Under no circumstances (unless removing dust from a digital file) should the cloning tool in Photoshop be used. At one point I question would it have been okay 20 years ago to submit a photograph that I had an area disguised by "burning in" through use of a darkroom enlarger. The answer was yes; however doing the same thing through Photoshop today would have the entry disqualified. My feeling was the picture editors fighting a losing battle and maybe the solution was simple. As long as the original feel, message or idea of the photograph was unchanged, then it should be allowed to be submitted. After all this was a judged competition. Surely it's only a matter time until a digital raw file can be hacked without anyone being ever aware of it.

Robert Doisneau's famous photograph of a French couple kissing in Paris was discovered decades later to have been set up. This is clearly staging, but this just makes for an interesting photographic tale, and once again I don't feel let down by his deeds. He once famously said, "I don't photograph life as it, but life as I would like it to be".

It's images that are manipulated for political gain that trouble me. They strive to imply factuality through concealed fiction. Perhaps the one thing in common all these images share: on closer examination, shrouded somewhere amongst the rhetoric, you will always find a silent, innocent, lost child.

The Denial of Celebrity: A Critical Review of "Searching For Sugar Man"

by Haley Wiseman

"I got my nickname from this song," says an unfamiliar man, a record shop owner, as he drives through the beautiful landscapes of Cape Town listening to a song I've never heard before. Before I commit an hour and a half of my short attention span to a movie, I will have questions that need answers. I was indifferent as the red Play button that hovered over the "Searching For Sugar Man" poster, but not for long.

For many, Sixto Rodriguez was a rock star who softened South African apartheid's oppressions between the 1960's and 1990's. And in the same lifetime, somehow at the same time, he was a construction worker in Detroit whom many thought to be "not much more than a homeless person." How can this be the same man?

Figuring out Rodriguez is like hunting for a ghost, and the film's emphasis on what he meant to the South African socio-political climate adds to his mysterious lack of recognition. Logically, "chasing the money" would be the way to find Rodriguez, but we're brought to a dead end. The rumours that he burnt himself alive on stage, and the details of how his music travelled to South Africa turn some aspects of his existence into a kind of myth. But it's frustrating being forced to move forward with the story, when my concerns as a viewer feel blatantly disregarded. Director Malik Bendjelloul grabs my attention and my heart, but wrongfully assumes I can simply carry on with the route his documentation takes.

The genuine worry I have for this singer, however, makes interrogating Clarence Avant, one of Rodriguez's better known producers, feel appropriate. His defensiveness sets up a fork in this road. He asks, "What's important here? Rodriguez's story, or you worrying about the money?" For Bendjelloul, it is the story that's important. But for someone who isn't a documentary filmmaker, I can't see one without the other. Bendjelloul has said that the most important thing about starting a new project is having the drive to do it even if you don't have any support behind you.[1] This idea is reflected in Rodriguez himself, making it no surprise the director felt some connection to his story as he resorted to filming the final shots on an iPhone camera due to the expenses of using Super 8 film.[2]

The documentary makes me question if artists care about their craft, or solely the money they earn from it. When two Rodriguez fans on their own hunts for the singer meet, Stephen Segermen and Craig Strydom, they come to discover that Rodriguez is actually alive, and I momentarily forget about his lost riches. The film turns me into a fan, so it's hard to deny being excited. But after finishing the movie, why can't I shake off my dissatisfaction?

Rodriguez is genuinely content with his modest life as a construction worker in Detroit. He brushes off the idea of the life that could have been different, saying, "I don't know if it would have been for the better, it's certainly a thought." Rodriguez doesn't measure happiness by riches, clearly, and we know money doesn't buy happiness, but one would think comfort certainly does. "Just because someone is poor, doesn't mean their dreams aren't big and their souls aren't rich," one of his daughters explains while recounting her upbringing. It's unsettling to see these women look back on their childhood without sorrow, because *I* do. How could this family have lived the way they did, when on the same globe there was a deserved life full of opportunities waiting? I certainly don't live in a fantasy world with happy endings, and I understand that bad things happen to good people, but it's hard to grasp the fact that a better life for Rodriguez and his family was only a plane ride away.

His rejection of fame is humbling, and that further complicates my feelings towards this story. If Rodriguez is okay with the unresolved truth that his past success doesn't lie in his hands, why aren't I? To him, success means one thing and to me another. It's difficult to see a kind, talented musician not reaping the benefits of his hard work because it's rare today to *see* kind, talented musicians. Many celebrities, musicians in particular, seem to use their talent as a means to reach their end goal of fame and fortune. I am instead shown a man who's end goal seems to be pure happiness that comes from doing what he loves, whether it be manual labour or making music. And that quality may be just as unique as Rodriguez's story entirely. Rodriguez contrasts the typical celebrity story, as he makes a break with this narrative and doesn't move forward in the ways we're used to seeing.

Within a society and culture controlled by celebrities, this documentary makes me uncomfortable because it makes me face the way I define happiness, and ultimately, my own end goals. Rodriguez wanted his music to bring others joy, and consequently, that must bring him joy. Most of the money he's earned from the tours following has been given to his friends and family, as he continues to live in the same downtown Detroit home. As the course of his life took a 180-degree turn, this positive change boomeranged towards the people around him. Segermen left his job as a jeweller to be a music shop owner, and Rodriguez's daughter is now living

in South Africa married to the man who drove their family around the country during the tour. Work did not become Rodriguez's life, and on a scale smaller than celebrity, that's startling to encounter.

''Searching For Sugar Man. Netflix Online Streaming. Directed by Malik Bendjelloul. 2012. London: Studio Canal, 2012.

Artist Statement

Jesse Adigwe, 2016, *"Reverend Blue Jeans"*, Single artwork, Toronto.

Lost in Translation

by Jesse Adigwe

I have loved to write my entire life. For me writing, fiction in particular, has always been an outlet. By the time I turned ten, novella writing turned into song writing. When thirteen rolled along, my mother bought my brother and me guitars, we started taking lessons, and I began to sing: first words written by others, famous words sung by many, and then eventually my own. I first began to write about silly things, well at least things that seem silly today: the girl I liked, not having the things I wanted, and other things of that nature.

Between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, I wrote a lot of songs, but the writing wasn't beautiful to me; it felt selfish and juvenile. As I grew I realized that lyrics that were forced and written with intention I would never find beautiful. Beautiful lyrics must come out like air as you exhale, naturally. Beautiful lyrics must be an expression of emotion, an expression of self. I've always believed that these kinds of words can inspire.

Beauty is perhaps the most subjective of subjective terms, but I've always thought that when it came to music, surely the term gains a level of objectivity. It is my opinion that in music beauty represents a feeling rather than a sound: an indescribable feeling that fills you when you hear a string of notes or hear a certain lyric, a bursting, bubbling feeling. It is this feeling that drives me to want to create music. Without this feeling the desire would surely be lost, for in this feeling lies the passion, and the passion lies in the desire.

In my adult years, my song writing approach has become a well-practiced ritual. After many different systems and methods, I have finally found an arrangement that allowed me to create something that I at least viewed as half-decent. I suppose it is this pursuit of the "half-decent" that fuels all my work, though in music it is particularly evident due to the fact that this meticulousness can be seen and measured as I rewrite lyrics, change my intonation slightly or make the metaphors even more obscure.

I have never truly understood why I, and many others view the obscure and complex as beautiful. Words that twist and turn, that hide their meaning beneath mundane analogies; these words have formed the basis of our most lauded poetry, of our most storied playwrights. Is the beauty found in the complexity of the words, in the act of decoding their meaning, or perhaps in a clever mixture of both, and individually these two things merely frustrate the senses?

Stating what one means in the clearest possible way has become, or perhaps has always been ugly and juvenile. It is our love of metaphors, analogies and obscurity that makes me wonder if humans as a species are just naturally indirect, and the very thought of directness makes us uncomfortable. Poetry itself is built on indirectness, yet it is often seen as the purest form of emotional expression, even though every line is completely open to interpretation. However, I am no activist for directness. It was this directness and lack of obscurity that made me loathe the first songs I had ever written.

Looking back now, the first songs I had ever written seem silly. They are direct, they say exactly what I

felt in a clear and concise way, without metaphors or flowery language. For many indie, rock or rap artists, this could only be seen as poor song writing, lacking creativity, corny and uninspired; and I agree. Perhaps this view of the direct and the clear as ugly, juvenile or creatively lacking is born from our natural fear of our own emotions. Perhaps when we hear someone expressing their innermost thoughts and feelings, we are made uncomfortable, as expressing these thoughts and feelings ourselves would push us into a state of discomfort.

Perhaps this is built on our innate fear of openness; or our innate fear of rejection. Metaphor, and indirectness, leaves room for interpretation. By leaving room for interpretation it also leaves room for denial. It gives us a way out, a back door, in case our feelings are rejected. Metaphor satisfies our greatest need and our greatest fear; it gives just enough evidence of how we feel but not enough evidence for us to be persecuted based on this information. It is in this sense that metaphor can be view as one of the greatest answers to one of the greatest issues in the human psyche. "How can I say how I feel without saying how I feel?".

These thoughts and feelings are still expressed; they are just given the buffer of the metaphor; the buffer of obscurity. These songs are still saying the exact same thing; they are just given a veil. The songs that I write are still about the exact same thing I was writing about when I was thirteen. The only difference is that I have given them an obscurity; buried them in metaphor.

In this sense the words have been given depth. Perhaps it is this depth that I and so many others find beautiful. When I write, and I spend hours on phrasing and metaphor, I'm not doing this for the sake of the listener; it is something that I genuinely enjoy. Once it's right, and you can feel it, and perhaps you've even forgotten what it means, there is a sense of gratification that I feel, a sense of satisfaction; bliss.

I can't for the life of me remember what most of my best songs were about. They've been buried so deep in metaphor and obscurity, even I can't exactly tell you what everything means. All that I really remember is the feeling attached to it, or perhaps the place I was when I wrote it. In my opinion, it is the feeling rather than the meaning that makes the music beautiful. Even when I do remember exactly what my songs are about, I much prefer not to tell people, as I prefer for them to find their own meaning.

Perhaps metaphors in themselves are a way to run from such emotions, to bury them too deep to ever be dug up. And perhaps the metaphor itself acts as a complex map, that when carefully followed can allow these emotions to be found. Though I've always told people that I prefer to let others find their own meanings in my music, I also feel like this is just another way to be indirect about my emotions. I've given you the map, but I don't nearly have the heart to tell you what you'll find.

A song that people tell me is my best is called *Reverend Blue Jeans*. The first few lines of the song sing "The girl was blind today, but tell me how come she can see at night?" Ask me what that means now and I'll either lie or tell you that I don't know. All I remember is walking home from work in sheer bliss, singing. All I actually remember is the feeling of joy attached to those words, and the intensity of that emotion. I have always found beauty in the intensity of emotion.

Sketching Steps Forward

by Chante Barnwell

My artistic practice takes on many forms; it is never stagnant but constantly evolving. I was born in Toronto, Canada and raised in Scarborough-Agincourt North, an area in the east end of Toronto. My relationship with art started at the age of three. Drawing was second nature to me. I always had a pencil in my hand and a piece of paper in my pocket, ready to draw the next object or person

Death by Rhinestones, Chante Barnwell, 2009
Photo credit:Chante Barnwell

Versions of Vanity, Chante Barnwell, 2014
Photo credit:Chante Barnwell

that caught my eye. My mother reminds me of the times when I would offer my self-portrait drawings to visitors as they arrived at our home. The drawing surface did not matter, nor did the medium, but my artistic experience truly formed when I would tap the visitors on their knees, smile and present them with the drawing, suggesting that they place the artwork on their fridge.

These portraits expressed my need to create, and these moments confirmed the notion that art would forever be a part of my creative identity. As I grew older, I would add other media to my artistic explorations, and participate in performances of music, poetry and theatre. The start of my artistic expression in an academic environment was in junior high and high school. In junior high, I joined the yearbook and cultural committee, performed my poetry for the yearly talent shows, played the clarinet for school music festivals and exhibited my artwork in the school display cases. These experiences in junior high propelled me to continue sharing my artistic abilities, so I decided to consider auditioning for an advanced art program held within my high school.

The program required you to take art classes every semester and complete a large sketchbook with technical and perspective drawings, in addition to completing your other high school prerequisites and university prep requirements. The program accepted students through a successful interview with the supervising teacher of the program and a strong portfolio. The moment that I prepared my portfolio, went to the interview and successfully gained acceptance in the art program confirmed my place in the arts.

These early experiences demonstrated my will to proceed towards the goal of being a professional artist. Throughout my journey in high school, I continued to volunteer and participate in the arts and cultural events of the school. I became a volunteer yearbook editor and photographer, expanded my graphic design skills, explored printmaking, and learned typographic history. I performed in my high school steel band, helped organize the annual year-end art exhibitions, and performed poetry in my schools monthly coffee house.

I also constantly exhibited my own artworks and fondly remember the positive reactions I gained from fellow classmates and faculty, when displaying an artwork entitled Death by Rhinestones. This artwork displayed my exploration and unique replication of Damien Hirst's sculptural piece *For the Love of God,* the Diamond Skull[1] after I encountered the controversy it made in the contemporary art world. In addition, one of the most significant roles I held was being chosen to create the cover design for my grade 12 commencement ceremony program. The experience of creating artwork that represents a pivotal moment in the success of my peers as well as the artistic acknowledgement I received within the program solidified the steps I took to proceed into the next chapter of my artistic growth in higher education.

After graduating from high school in June 2010, I attended the University of Toronto Scarborough in September of the same year and completed an Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree, Specialist in Art and Culture, Major in Studio (visual arts) and Minor in Art History in June 2014. The multidisciplinary nature of my art specialization and the other areas of study that I explored including English, cultural theory, antiquities, classic studies, public policy, art management and anthropology among others, made me further contextualize the subject matter of my artistic practice. My exploration of various art me-

diums and my commitment to yearly exhibitions in my undergraduate career continued to drive my creativity and expanded my artistic footprint with every artwork, presentation and assignment I completed.

The final artwork I completed for my 4th year undergraduate degree thesis exhibition was entitled Versions of Vanity. The series contained three mixed media wall installations that is an adaptation of the 17th century vanity paintings, historically popularized by Dutch painters. The series explores the complexity of consumption, ornamentation and displays of vanity in society. The drawn and painted images within each shadow box reference the transient nature of life. The slices of cake and exorbitant use of gold in this series referred to the indulgent nature of cake as a celebrated and highly commercialized food within our society.

While pursuing my undergraduate degree my photography skills evolved because of four photo-based university courses that solidified my interest in the medium. These included Introduction to Digital Studio Practice, Introduction to Photography, Digital Studio Practice 2 and Documentary Photography. These courses not only presented the practical aspects of photography but also discussed the historical, cultural and political parts of the medium. These explorations pushed me to deepen my understanding of photography through the lens of documentary media.

The various ways the arts have influenced my academic experience has prepared me to venture into this new chapter of my life as a first year MFA Documentary Media student at Ryerson University. I look forward to creating a major research project that reflects my interests and creates a critical conversation around the historical subject matter I will investigate through documentary photography.

“I want to be a Director”

by Beatriz Campos

“I want to be a director” was a phrase that seemed to please my parents more than “I want to be a tennis player”: it costs less than competitions, my coach and a new set of strings for my decadent racket. At the same time it helped me to overcome the idea that I might not live to see my twenties. Teenagers and chronic diseases are not a good mix.

And it was a nice phrase. It made me popular in middle school for a little while. Everyone likes the idea that artists may one day be rich and famous. I wonder if they still think it is cool to go after your dreams, when they gave up theirs, or if today they

stop to think about what an artist is; because I didn't back then, and now I can't stop thinking about it.

"I want to be a director" got me through high school, and gave me a sense of purpose in a sea of uncertain kids who had to start making adult decisions while I was the adult amongst them. I was the Joseph Campbell "hero" that today I hate and look down upon. High school is definitely no longer in my Demo Reel.

"I want to be a director" didn't get me into college. I had to chew it and swallow it raw, like food you eat when you are a guest at a dinner where you don't want to be, with people you'd prefer to never speak with again.

As in some of the sci-fi books I've read most of my life, I was substituted for a carcass that went to two universities: a top student, with a bright future ahead, no social life, an anxiety crisis waiting to happen and a dying will. I was on the right path to become a functional member of society. Doing what was expected of me, I had to prove that not going into college right out of high school didn't make me stupid, lazy, or worthy of being kicked out of home.

"Didn't you want to be a director?" How could I be one if there was no job? How could I be one if I had no way of being one? How could I be one, when I had not even time to think for myself? How could I be a director if I was clearly not smart enough? I had to be one of a kind; there was no other way.

Then, there were forms I had to fill in. A test I needed to take. Information I had to gather.

"You're going to New York," said a college supervisor.

How come?

"You're going to New York."

The world stopped for a moment. Then I vomited. A metaphorical vomit in form of tears and uncontrollable laughter. I breathed for the first time in years. Relief was an unknown feeling for me until that day. I didn't have to prove myself anymore. I went up to my father and said, "I did it! You doubted me but I did it."

"I want to be a director" was the first thing I said when I got there and colleagues asked me what I wanted to do. I said it with an inflated chest, looking people in the eye for the first time in all my life. I gave my cheek for people to slap, my heart for people to break, my pride to be shattered. All for the sake of becoming a director.

I learned that I was a minority the moment I opened my mouth and refused to get rid of my accent and my way of seeing the world. I accepted myself with all the flaws that I could possibly imagine and started wearing them as a flag and not as shame. I cried as I missed my mom entering a two-week-straight flu that seemed to be there to stay, to only laugh at my own luck for almost ripping a finger off with a knife and sending pictures of the hospital process to the same mom I was once missing. I became myself, by losing all my ground.

I came back home shouting "I want to be a director, and you will not stop me!" The lack of a job will not stop me, the lack of faith will not stop me and your pessimistic life will not stop me. I got knocked out once. Twice. Three times. Lost count. However, it was different. I graduated in half the time expected, made a web series in a weekend that ended up in a festival, got into the three master's programs to which I applied. I wasn't getting sadder, I wasn't swallowing things again. I was spitting like a furious llama.

"I want to be a director" is not about sounding smart anymore. It is not about being special in the midst of other kids. It is about making a statement. It is about the world structure, the culture I belong to, about the person that I am, about what I believe, the stories I need to tell. It is fighting what people expect of you, sticking the finger into the open wound that people are ignoring, giving voice to those who need it.

Even going to the other side of the globe: from hot to cold, friendly to distant, in a group to loneliness, with only the expectation of being heard by more people that can help make a difference; nothing will make me give up.

I may not be a director yet, but I am sure I will find a way there.

by Sarah Claydon

I make art for myself.

I make art because I am curious about the world, eager to explore and express the distance that separates me from others.

The creative process is an adventure, a personal discovery. My work is not autobiographical per se, but every act of play shapes my identity anew.

My curiosity has propelled me to engage with many media and with many subjects.

This makes me difficult to categorize and summarize.

I welcome it.

I indulge in the secrecy; I indulge in the ambiguity. It feels subversive, it feels cathartic.

I escape in my work, but I also build. Each pixel, layer, frame, contributes to a world where the dirt serves as soil.

Don't saddle me with that theory, or this notion. Doctrine strangles creativity.

Art allows me break free from categories. It serves as engagement with the unknown - that which has not been articulated, or cannot be captured.

The canon is a weapon, use it strategically and with caution. The archive can ignite, but it can also confine.

This approach applies to documentary media as much as any genre. Truth has many narratives and many stories.

The cruel fact of bias permeates all content creation and audience engagement. The dynamism of storytelling is perhaps its most true to life aspect.

In making art for myself, I can face the world honestly.

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Leopard Mirror, Talia Eylon, 2009

ample

by Talia Eylon

Flower Puss, Talia Eylon, 2008

ample and generous, the photographic portrait series featuring obese socialite and model Chandi Désirée Esmé, was my response to a world where being thin is almost always praised and being fat is almost always ridiculed. Ms. Esmé simultaneously provides the viewer with a challenge and a relief.

Her clown face, gestures, performance and expression offer alternative portrayals of sexiness, play, humour and the ideal female form. Separating myself from the persona of Ms. Esmé was a liberating act. It allowed me to shed the limitations of identity usually associated with self-portraits. Though we have shared the same body, she has lived a very different life. Born into privilege and plenty in Mumbai, India, to a Greek mother and a French father, Ms. Esmé has never been one to balk at societal pressures. Brazen, sharp and enigmatic, her story--if she ever told it--would amount to a series of incredible anecdotes.

The portraits were captured with 600-type and Spectra Polaroid film. Using assistants (friends) to snap the shots allowed for easy movement in real spaces. I didn't have to worry about managing timers and tripods while also performing. We would take a few photos, then review and adjust. I scanned the images and spent (many happy) hours at the computer, digitally retouching every detail before I had them printed at 40 inches square.

The unique aesthetics of instant film, saturated colours, sharp frontal flash and soft focus work well with the different clothing styles and various locations to result in images which do not reference a specific time or place. There is a familiar nostalgic look to the Polaroids, but free of the original white borders and small size, the images lack the usual aspects of precious family artifacts.

The performative aspect of entering public spaces as Ms. Esmé was empowering. It felt awkward at first, as I was unsure of how people would react. They looked, of course, but mostly people just went on with their business. Each progressive shot emboldened me. The process was great fun though I was still conscious not to linger too long.

My aim with *ample and generous* was to actively explore the politics of size, sex and beauty, so that the arousal of an inner conflict within the viewer is anticipated: individually and communally defined boundaries between the sensual and sexy, and the lewd and unbeautiful become blurred. Should a viewer desire to discover more about this uncompromising character, or 'see' her and not just view her, the customary power dynamics of gender as well as size will have been momentarily rescinded.

There is also an appropriation of the notion of fat as funny. I tried to eliminate any reason for ridicule of the character. Although the images may make the viewer laugh or smile, they laugh *with* her playfulness.

There's never a feeling of completion or finality to any of my artistic projects. I am still interested in the same ideas. They develop, expand, and mature, but they still feel like the same core ideas. Ms. Esmé is no more real than she is fictional. I ask myself, what will she be up to 20 years from now?

Since I started this series eight years ago, body positivity and fat acceptance have received increased coverage in mainstream Western media. This is hardly a revolution, but size politics have entered the public discourse. At the same time, the most insidious rationale for alarm about the so-called "obesity epidemic" is a concern about health. Putting aside an analysis of the scientific research of weight and health, the more revealing matter is apparent when examining size prejudices and their justifications, we are confronted with the issue of whether health is a social responsibility.

Fat, it seems, can hypothetically be accepted as long as the fat individual is healthy. The implications are twofold; 1) we owe society and each other good health, and 2) if we don't have good health we are

Lemon, Talia Eylon, 2009

Pool Babe, Talia Eylon, 2009

a burden on society. Without intending to, this attitude reveals a deep societal resentment and hostility towards those living with illness (physical or mental).

The argument for 'healthiness' is always presented as separate from vain or shallow concerns for 'beauty'. But why does 'unhealthy' disgust so many of us? I hypothesize that it may be an instinct from our earlier days. With little understanding of diseases, we avoided and/or ostracized the ill from the group so that we were more likely to survive. It's as if we are viscerally reliving our past, not able to disconnect memory from emotional response. Regardless of the rationale, ideals of healthiness appear to be entangled with beauty standards. These ideas and connections need to be examined and challenged. This is where next I will likely find myself artistically.

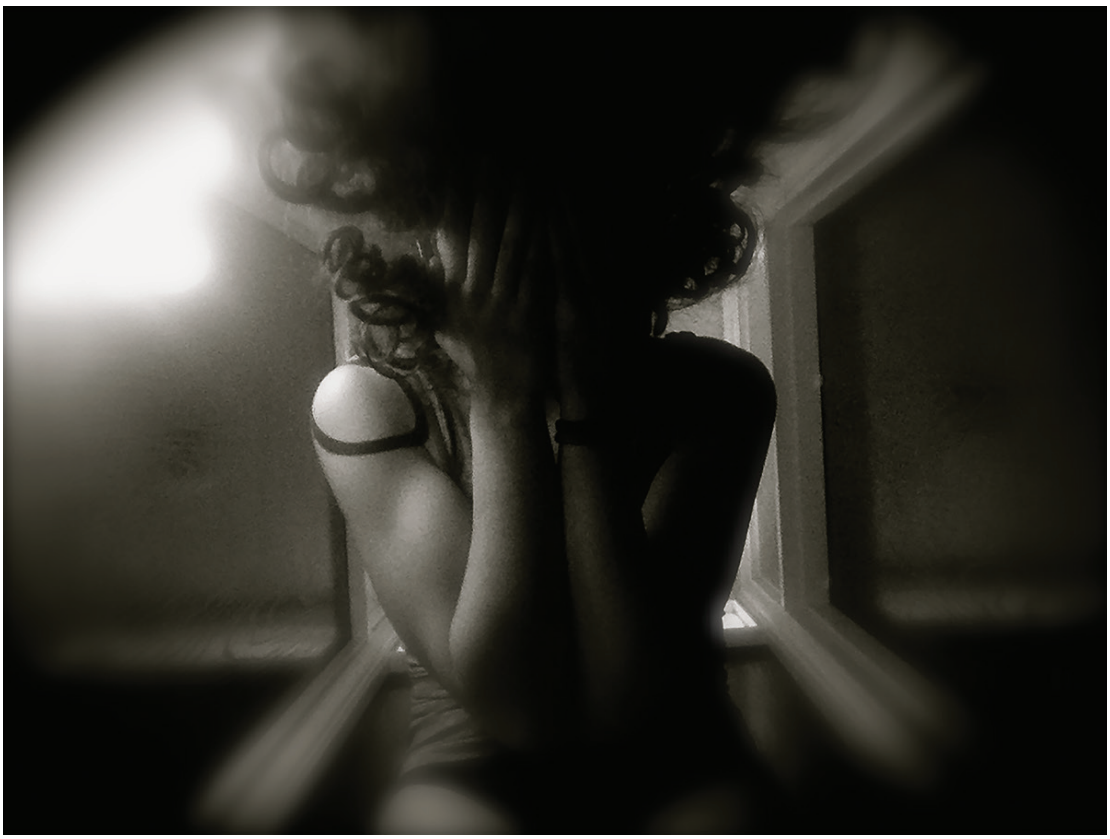
Morning News, Talia Eylon, 2009

Phone, Talia Eylon, 2009

Artist Statement

by Tara Hakim

It was only a few years ago, halfway through my undergraduate programme in the UK, that I realised what all my creative endeavours really meant. Over one Christmas break back home in Jordan, both my grandmothers told me almost identical stories of a younger me. What they had most remembered, what they had seen me as, was a quiet little girl who knew where the paper and



Falling, Tara Hakim, 2012 (diptych)

coloured pencils in the house were. They said I spent hours seated, drawing, colouring, painting; essentially creating. The funny thing is, before hearing their stories, I had no memory of this.

I began to remember, and realised a pattern, or rather an innate essence of myself. I found that, as sharing wasn't my strong suit and I preferred to keep things to myself, creating was the way I expressed myself: my fears, dreams, experiences, thoughts, and feelings. It was and is a necessary constant in my life.

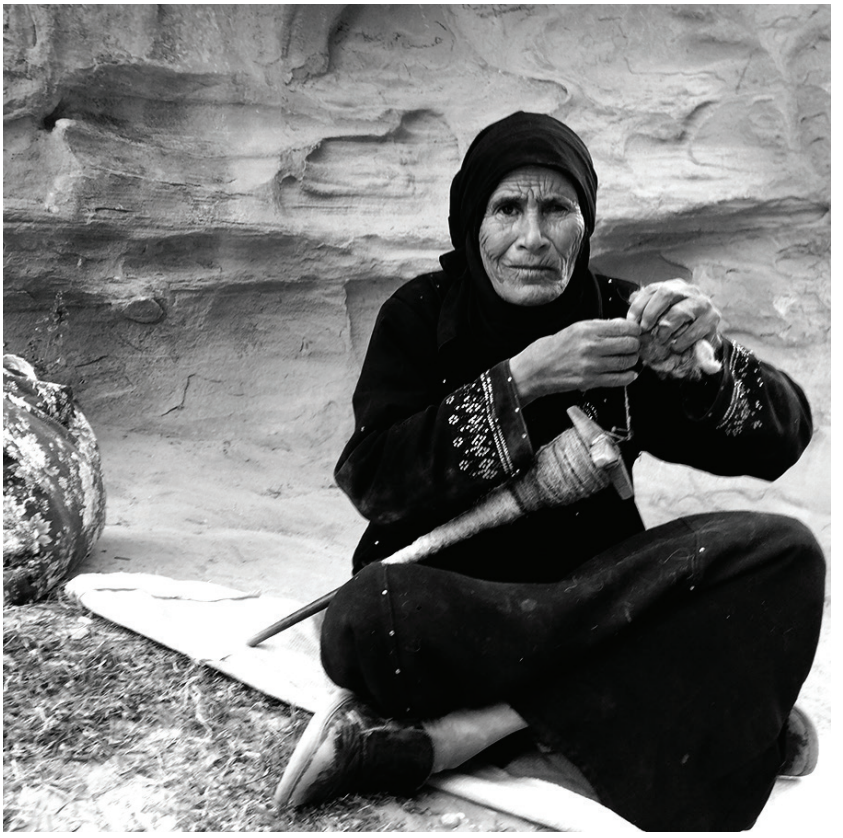
Yet it has never been a fixed constant. Just as the state of myself evolves, develops, weakens, learns, and experiences, the process of creating too differs: in terms of time, technique, medium, and subject. I cherish the process of creating. The outcome of my work is never known. I start with an idea, a concept, a feeling, a subconscious drive and go from there. I follow the trail of my thoughts, jumping off at any point worth elaborating. I may consider an idea and then disregard it. Or I may allow the idea to lead me. I find that if I let go of control, the work emerges as a result of the process itself. I consider my approach experimental, allowing myself to trust in the relationship between research and outcome.

It seems the subject of self is tightly tied to my work, and my process. There are two ways in which the self manifests in my work. Firstly, there is the literal self as subject: the attempt to understand one's mind and body, the exploration of one's thoughts, actions, feelings and dark secrets, in hopes of processing, understanding, and overcoming one's fears and limits.

This way of working seemed far-fetched, and I thought so myself until I encountered a cathartic feeling at the end of a one-year visual exploration of my struggle with anorexia in 2012. I started with the idea of tackling this issue and let go of control. I ended up with a body of work encompassing photographs, video, sound, and a performance piece. It was not the outcome that helped me understand, it was the process of getting there: the experimenting with techniques, the repetition of expressing the same idea in different ways, the searching of the mind I did, and the connection I built with my body. The use of my mind and body became a vehicle to express and understand myself.

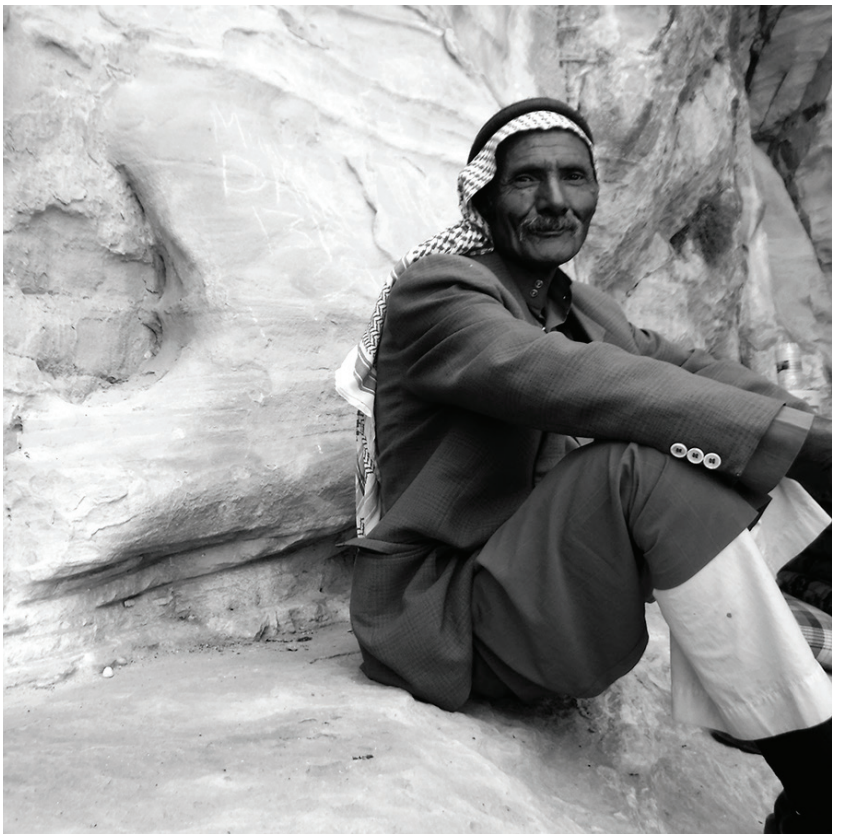
Secondly, there is the self as a reference of creation and exploration. In this manifestation, the self, the mind and body, are no longer visible. They are a part of the conceptual body from which the work derives. This is mostly true in my daily depictions and explorations using photography. For this purpose, I have found my iPhone to be my best friend. With it, I can capture the moments that grab my attention. A touching moment between a mother and her child, an old man eating ice cream, a beautiful landscape… whatever causes a stir in me, I explore. Sometimes the photo is enough, and sometimes the photo leads me further. I begin to ask questions. Why did this grab my attention? What does it mean? Through this process of observing what attracts me, I learn a lot about myself, and consequently about human nature.

Observing is a daily habit. I seek detail, movement, interactions… I observe myself, I observe people around me, their habits, their styles, their interactions. I search for stories, for realities, for connections, and for a way to reflect them. This reflection may be photographic, it may be a painting, a piece of writing, or a video piece. The outcome is unknown. All I know is I believe in the little things, in emotions and individual stories. There is suffering and beauty in all I see, feel and observe, and that is at the core of what I aspire to show the world.



Connections in the Desert, Tara Hakim, 2016 (Series)

Connections in the Desert, Tara Hakim, 2016 (Series)



Connections in the Desert, Tara Hakim, 2016 (Series)

Following My Shadow on Queen E, Cince Johnston 2016

Barebones

by Cince Johnston

Indecisive, Cince Johnston 2012

To photograph is to be alone with my thoughts and my camera. Although this exploration may verge on the precipice of loneliness, it is not lonely.

When I photograph, I feel I have physically arrested time. It is here my pulse quickens.

My camera poses as a handheld mirror - it confronts the negative and positive dualities within my uncertain self.

Instinctively, I flee from the act of painting. To photograph is an intoxicating sense of freedom.

As I record the world around me, it feeds my mind's soul with dancing imagery.

My camera functions as an extension of my body - it bridges my inner life with my external world.

My process starts with a roaming gaze. It is a constant state where I am searching, reading, looking, sizing, feeling...and even when I am not looking, I somehow am.

Some days I see nothing.

To describe myself, I would say spontaneous, raw and deliberating. To describe my images, I would say spontaneous, raw and deliberate.

What I see does not always match what I capture. What I think does not always match what I capture.

Instinctively, I reduce an image to its barest discernable state. And then I get closer. Tomorrow I might step away.

My life with the camera grounds me in the moment while simultaneously letting me dream.

To truly analyze the meaning of photography in my life, it is the source of peace in the chaos of my existence.

Writing this scares me. To immortalize words is to eternally freeze myself.

The Journalist and the Tightrope Walker: An Artist Statement

by Kate Latimer

I learned about the kind of writer I wanted to be from a large, hairy, Washington Post journalist named Gene Weingarten. In an anthology of his work, he tells the story about the night he learned how to write. He'd been working on a piece about a sewage treatment plant in Detroit where the bosses were "inept" and the equipment was "outdated". He was passionate about the topic and outraged at the state of this facility. His first draft was fancy—using big words to make sure the readers knew how smart he was. His editor gave

it back to him saying it was "fine". Weingarten went home, got drunk, and then he wrote this first sentence: "Every day, liquid sewage— three million tons of it from starting points across metro Detroit— roars through the subterranean channels into a collecting point five miles down the road from the Renaissance Center, on West Jefferson. Then it hits the fan."

Writing is a tightrope, and we creators are the tightrope walkers. We have to go out into the world and get our hands dirty. Get mad! Get involved! And then we have to come home to our desks and sit by ourselves and mold our experiences into stories. And while we're finding our style and form (those elusive bitches), the process can be tricky. And so we write and write and write and for most of us, those early days don't go very well. The act of writing is to capture truth through a medium that operates on the fundamentals of illusion and metaphor. Often, putting truth down on the page is the art of crafting meaning out of what you aren't actually saying.

And for me, writing hurts. It's an expression of the internal self, and bringing that self out into the world— giving birth to it (as I'm sure any mother can tell you) is a painfully laborious process. The products of my own brain are sometimes hideous to see, sometimes beautiful, and sometimes disappointing— merely a shadow of what I had imagined was hiding within.

The writer is ever changing, ever evolving; and so too is the writer's practice. Perhaps we get up at nine every morning and write for three hours, and then start drinking at noon, as Graham Greene did. Perhaps we work all day at jobs our minds never show up for, and at night we write the great novel we've been planning, as Jeffrey Eugenides did.

I don't think it's "the how" that is important. Your motives decide your fate. The difference between manslaughter and first-degree murder is intention. When I write, I write to tell a story. But ultimately I want that story to be an expression of something more eternal— some idea that can bring new meaning to peoples' lives. Gene Weingarten, in his conclusion, writes about the advice he would give as an editor to his writers. He would ask them what their story was about, and they would say something about an amusement park closing, or a government policy changing, and he'd tell them, "your story is going to be about the meaning of life." For Weingarten, true meaning only came from the knowledge that the stories of our day-to-day lives stand-in for a greater universal truth.

He ends the introduction to his book by stating, "a real writer is someone for whom writing is a terrible ordeal. That is because he knows, deep down, with an awful clarity, that there are limitless ways to fill a page with words, and that he will never, ever, do it perfectly." Fortunately for me, the tightrope walker, the stakes are never as high as perfection. I only ever want to make it across, and hope the audience can make something greater out of my little triumph.

Calculus, Chemistry, and Chord Changes

by Julian Muia

As I sit in a sunlit control room pondering the best approach to writing this piece, I am suddenly startled by a loud shriek that blares through the monitors. Jumping off the sofa, I rush to the main floor where my band has been experimenting with synthesizer sounds for the better part of an hour. The Implications, a pop group I formed in elementary school nine years ago, have been nestled into Baldwin

Street Sound, a recording studio in Chinatown, where we are currently writing and recording our second album. Tripping over a mess of cords and guitar cases, I move to the vintage 1968 Moog keyboard with which my bandmates and songwriting partners Daniel Konikoff and Mitchell Stuart are playing. The sound they have designed resembles a distorted cry, high-pitched and noisy.

"This would sit well in the post-chorus bridge," Daniel declares.

"No, we'll stick it in the actual chorus," Mitch rebuts.

We are working on a three-minute dance rock song called "High Hopes/Low Expectations." We wrote it this morning. While we have traditionally prided ourselves on our meticulous rewriting and editing process, this song is an exercise in spontaneity. The song was composed in an assembly-line process with a high level of efficiency: I wrote the melody, Daniel wrote the lyrics, our bassist, Ryan Levine, arranged the vocal and instrumental harmonies, and Mitchell produced it. Combining these four distinct voices and perspectives allows us to craft a much more colourful composition – a sort of sonic mosaic.

We are students of a contemporary pop age. Dismissing the indulgences of the independent music scene, we have instead made it our collective goal to simplify and excite. The four of us have each carefully studied the works of pop's celestial deities – the cheerful sincerity of Lennon and McCartney, the anthemic bubblegum of ABBA, and the Euro/R&B hybrid of Max Martin. We are not trying to make art – as controversial a statement as that may be – we only wish to entertain.

Back in the control room, we hover around a table of day-old Krispy Kreme donuts and empty bottles of Belgian strawberry beer. Mitchell, seated on a computer chair in front of the mixing console, suggests swapping the pre-chorus and chorus sections of the song.

"The buildup into the Moog hook is bigger than the release itself."

Daniel, ever protective of his witty narratives, quickly vetoes this idea, asserting that it will disrupt the overall lyrical structure of the composition.

"Why don't we Frankenstein the sections? You know, take the topline of the pre-chorus and stick it with the chanting in the back half of the chorus?" I suggest.

The room falls silent as each member considers the idea. Mitchell does a quick edit on Pro-Tools, the industry's standard recording software, to help us visualize the change. Upon listening back, they all nod in unanimous approval.

My approach to composition has always been rooted in four fundamental pop principles, which together make up an ethos known as *melodic math*. Max Martin, the enigmatic Swedish songwriter behind nearly every Billboard number one hit from the mid-1990s to present (including acts such as the Backstreet Boys, Bon Jovi, Katy Perry, and Taylor Swift) developed the technique. The design is so simple it's almost shocking:

1. Only three melodies – a verse, pre-chorus, and chorus – any more than that and you'll disorient your audience. Limit the amount of chords played beneath the melody to four.

2. Vague lyrics – any specific names or references will limit the song's appeal, so keep the narrative ambiguous.

3. A fun dance beat with a tempo of 120 beats per minute (this psychologically replicates the pace of the human heart).

4. Finally, an overall length of three and a half minutes.

It is very difficult to make these four elements sound effortless, and that's what makes pop music so exciting. Melodies seldom fall from trees or appear out of thin air, and songwriters must also consistently challenge themselves to create music that can cross cultural, linguistic, and social barriers. The genre is frequently dismissed as low art, the auditory equivalent of junk food. Critics will call it unsophisticated and juvenile, while praising genres such as alternative or independent rock for their emotional depth. My counter-argument is that it is much easier for a niche genre to appeal to a small following of devotees, and much more difficult for a genre such as popular music to appeal to everyone.

Back on the main floor, Ryan plays a slightly detuned standup piano that makes the room sound like a saloon. Daniel stands next to me, reciting the lyrics that he wrote atop my melody.

Oh no, what did she expect?
Thinking she could get the world and every single continent,
So I'd try to do my best,
Ripped her out some Atlas pages but didn't know the consequence,

Mitchell points out that there are two too many syllables – the melodic math doesn't add up. Like mathematicians, we carefully add and subtract from the phrases. The first and third lines have seven syllables. The second line, fifteen. The fourth line has sixteen, while it should be matching the second. We amend the final line.

Ripped her out an Atlas page but didn't know the consequence.

Now every other line matches, and it is significantly more pleasing to the ear. With a combination of carefully organized syllables and an ascending melody, the melodic math creates a sense of euphoria in the listener's brain. The mind predicts where the melody will turn next, and when it accurately does so, it feels immensely rewarding. The neurological science behind the phenomena is not something I quite understand on a technical level, but there is no doubt that it exists. With this in mind, I will always write songs with the goal of triggering some sort of cerebral response.

We work on the song for a couple of more hours before calling it a night at 1 AM. After working on a piece of music for more than nine hours, the melodies can become grating, the result of ear fatigue. Packing up our equipment and cleaning the control room, we listen back to "High Hopes/Low Expectations" one last time. It still needs work – the bass guitar isn't properly syncopated with the bass drum, the vocal harmonies are a little too operatic, and the programmed drums are just placeholders. But the four core elements of melodic math are already present, a feat considering how recently the song was written. Our detractors may call us generic, but we instead choose to treat writing as a form of calculus and chemistry – adding and subtracting words and notes to trigger cognitive reactions. It may be a challenge to accomplish, but it sure as hell is a lot of fun.

Images and Identities

by Chrys Vilvang

If we understand ourselves as the sum of our experiences, then our compulsion to document these experiences should be driven by the revelation that our memories are no longer housed internally. The phenomenon of memory is intrinsically linked with the creation of our identity, yet the process of remembering itself remains largely mysterious. The fluidity with which the mind goes from

Jason (and I) on Street View, Chrys Vilvang, 2015 (Street view images by Google)

one place to another is something that cannot be adequately replicated by technology, but the devices we use to document our lives still play important roles in how we conceive of ourselves and our personal histories.

Many of us have accumulated vast personal media archives that would have been unimaginable in the analog era, yet we rarely consult the dusty hard drives where our memories are now put to rest. The images we create are not independently significant; it is how we engage with them once they have been collected that gives them life. If memory has transitioned from an embodied phenomenon to a mediated realm, interactions with our own media will continue to play a role in the development of our identities. The significance of this remains largely to be seen, and it is from this perspective that I have sought to reinvigorate the personal archive.

In my own struggles to recollect, I often find myself lost in the nostalgia of navigating my documented past, only to realize I have wandered years away from the specific event I hoped to revisit; or worse, that I have forgotten altogether the original image for which I was searching. The internal process of remembering often alters a memory or retroactively imbues it with some new or greater meaning. Memory is fallible, unreliable; there are elements of creativity that enter into the process of retrieval. Images often contradict recounted stories, and prevailing trends seem to value an emphasis on the documented version of history over the retold or reenacted one.

"Pictures or it didn't happen" has become a common expression, yet we are continually disappointed with media's inability to properly capture the sensational or emotional scope of a lived experience. Undocumented events seem to take on a life of their own once they have entered the realm of memory; imagination becomes an integral part of their reconstruction. Placing embodied memory and documented experiences in opposition to each other fails to recognize the unique potential of reconciliation between the two. The ability to document our lives as we presently do is unique to this generation, but it is in our engagement with the media we create that this becomes a privilege. Memory may be fluid, but the archive is not static, and it is from this understanding that we can hope to make our stories known and bring our memories to life.

by Jeremie Warshafsky

My cousin Julien died on June 28th, 2016 at the age of 30. He was married 10 days earlier at his family's summer home in France to Mariana, a Portuguese girl 3 years younger than him. I didn't know Julien well. My aunt and uncle and two cousins had moved to England in 1998 after my grandmother passed away. My aunt was from there originally. I was too young to maintain my own relationship

with my cousins. I would see them every few years for a family event or the occasional trip to visit each other. As I got older, I grew fonder of them. We got along well. I began to dislike that I didn't really know them. Family events can be deceiving, implying family closeness, but they just stick a bunch of people in a room to tolerate each other for three hours. To get to know someone requires intimacy and time, neither of which was at our disposal.

Hindsight is shitty. My biggest regret is that I assumed there would be time. I would see Julien in the future on our own terms, and then I would get to know him. To lose someone makes you uncomfortably conscious of how volatile the present is.

I flew to England with my dad that night to be with Julien's family. It was hard to comprehend what had happened. They had always been there, over there in England somewhere, and if any of us wanted to talk we could. This would be the second time I had ever been to their house. I wasn't happy I was going, but to say that I wasn't curious would be a lie. To spend 5 days with these people I hardly knew was interesting to me. To have time to explore their home, their place, them.

Naturally we talked about Julien a lot. Through this I began to piece together his life. Who he was, what he liked, what his sense of humour was. But I also pieced together who my family was, sometimes feeling like a spy gathering intelligence, albeit one with good intentions.

After I returned home from the wedding, I started going through my photos. I wanted to make Julien and Mariana a book to celebrate them. I pressed flowers from their wedding into a novel and brought it back to Canada with me, intending to somehow preserve them and include them in the book. I got as far as selecting the photos before he died. I haven't touched them since. In fact I haven't touched any of my work since. I am not sure why. I have no interest in the creative process right now, nothing excites me, and nothing intrigues me. I used to have my camera on me all the time but I haven't picked it up since unless someone explicitly asked me to.

It seems useless. How could I shoot anything else, comparatively meaningless, when I have 200 photos, 200 memories that I have no way to resolve? The photos represent limbo for me, a purgatory of creativity. If I can't do something with these, what can I do with a shot of a friend in the park?

To grow as an artist requires confrontation with the unpleasant or the ugly truths. To reconcile ideas that others will not face, or that you do not want to. I have learned this over time, through trial and error. To understand what the issue is, you first need to shoot and then go through the images. Through this process you understand what the moment meant to you, how visceral an experience was. This exploration through photography helps me understand the event as much as myself.

Pressed flowers from wedding, Jeremie Warshafsky 2016

Artist Statement

by Peter Watson

If I'm honest, it used to concern me greatly how other people viewed the quality my photographs, but now I lie, and say, "I really don't care".

If being insecure about your work could be rewarded in monetary terms, then I would be retired, lying on a sunbed, next to a clear blue pool in some exotic clime. There are days I am convinced my latest image is so extraordinary that a museum grand enough to house such a distinguished work of art has yet to be built. However, there are also days I decide that shredding the very same photograph, would be a pitiful use of such a handy piece of office equipment. But on the days when I recognize an encouraging progress in my photography, I try to prolong the feeling of success and push away the clouds of doubt.

For some, a nightmare is a misunderstood or upsetting dream. My definition would involve a group of people staring at me while I try to formulate a coherent and thought-provoking sentence about my images. Having practised a pre-planned speech on the subway ride in that morning, I am convinced that my judgement is


HITACHI
MIZZ


Giorgio

accurate and inspiring. I later find myself gazing at a projected work, but am now uncertain if I was even present when the shutter was released, only to wonder if any clues have been left behind in the metadata, pointing a finger towards the perpetrator of this crime against photography. At this point my resting heart rate has tripled from what it should be and my blood pressure climbs to an arterial rupturing high. Not the best way to exit this world, but at least it would be quick, and between the paramedics and the ensuing confusion, the flickering of the image on the wall would make for a perfect memorial of a faux career.

I am always in total and complete awe of a fellow student, lecturer, or artist who can be at ease simultaneously with themselves and their handiwork. Listening to them wax lyrical about observations and a sense of awareness of their craft I become even more baffled at how I can't seem to scrutinize and inspect my own work in the same way. The question is, how did I make it through a degree in photography followed by years refining my "art", still confused about what to say about my creations and myself? How does one even discover this? Do you awake one morning to the sounds of chirping birds outside your window, pull back the curtains and "boom", it hits you? All those thousands of hours of reading, looking and thinking about imagery, suddenly paying off, and it all becomes clear. And with the revelation accomplished, a sense of belonging now envelops you. I too can now proudly wave my membership card for the "Club of the Insightful".

There have been many times I've shown work and attempted to speak about it, and the curious thing is that I seem to misjudge the outcome. This first example was from a talk I gave about my degree exhibition work. I had spent a year documenting the fans that followed "boy bands" around the U.K. These were the popular music trends of the mid 1990's.

I was certain that the lead images would be a "hit", but instead they were described as "derivative".

However, recently I showed some new work about the Highway 401, that had yet to be seen by anyone. Truly tentative about the reaction and expecting the worst, I was pleasantly surprised by the positive feedback.

The previous decades have not been a complete waste. My passion and need to take photographs has only increased, and then there are the lifelong friends I've acquired on the journey still there, only now in distant corners of the world, encouraging me on my quest. One recently offered some advice, "Fake it, till you make it". Wasn't this what I'd been doing all along, but always falling short of the "make it" part? Perhaps this is not my destiny, to have a shelf full of published work or for the New York Times to inquire if I was available to do a very important project for them, subject matter whatever I want?

If an artist's statement were to be honest, then perhaps it would be better entitled, an "Artist's Confession". For surely my only remaining hope is that I'm not out there alone, wandering around blindly, feeling for the edges of the wall, in the photographic wilderness of uncertainty.

401 Indy go-karting, Peter Watson

Paintball City, Peter Watson

Why I Write

by Haley Wiseman

When I was a little girl, I dreamed of being Will Ferrell. At 11:30 on any given Saturday night, my childhood was spent wedged between my parents ogling the TV screen. “Saturday Night Live” parodies and satirizes the real world that was just outside my 9-year-old reach, yet the characters spoke a language I understood. I can’t tell you why I thought I had anything in common with this tall,

hairy, middle-aged man. But he was my role model, and the "SNL: The Best of Will Ferrell" DVD was my bible. I would replay scenes over and over until I was in perfect sync with each of Will's personas. He made me laugh and in turn, my imitations of him made others laugh at me, and I took this applause as acceptance.

I was naturally drawn to the kids who also enjoyed movies like "A Night at The Roxbury" and "Dumb and Dumber." While these slapstick comedies made fun of experiences we had yet to encounter, like love, we were still amused. We didn't *really* know what Cameron Diaz was using to stick her hair up, but we knew it wasn't hair gel.

Regardless of the reason, laughing together brought us close and became my way of connecting to those around me. I soon began creating characters and stories of my own. "Revenge of the Evil Toilet Plungers" was my first publication - a comic book my father laminated and bound. This simple gesture made me realize I have something worth saying, and stories worth creating. If someone else thought the idea of toilet plungers ruling the world was funny, I felt that they understood me.

I continued to write throughout my elementary years and into high school, taking on different voices, such as a prison inmate, a bird, and a rapper. These helped me make sense of a reality I was only beginning to explore through adolescence. Though this eventually led me to dramatic writing, it was my appreciation for comedy that first showed me how to look at one story in multiple ways. I *could* find the ridiculous in the serious, just like Will Ferrell did as he walked on the "SNL" stage. More than that, I unraveled characters through their relationships, conflicts and histories and learnt sympathy beyond my fictional worlds. Knowing how a line or action can turn into a joke pushed me to knowing and justifying *why* this person said this or did that. Drama needs depth, but this attitude became a part of my identity as an author to other genres too. I write about people, and it is who they are that drags them into the situations that they face and I must resolve.

Since I've begun writing, storytelling has evolved in its technology and the place it holds in my life. What used to be a pastime and something I was just good at is now a practice I want to make my profession. My stories have to succeed past my father tying them together with spiral binding and plastic, they now have to be legible on different screens and channels too. Even my beloved "SNL" lives beyond the borders of its famed cable time-slot: seeing each cast member on social media brings stronger personalities to these brief and simple sketches. Though traditional TV and film aren't dying, new media are increasingly being used for the same purposes, and this changes the meaning of producer and audience. As creator I am given more control over my work as my worlds and the people in them can exist in different dimensions. I don't need to restrict my narratives to prose and script, and these endless possibilities have nurtured and coincided with my media studies. Having empathy towards my characters has developed into knowing how each platform gives an altered version of the same story. The culture I am now a part of has shaped my perception, and I am forced to never stop growing as an artist and as a person.

Being a writer has made me conscious of who I am, my relationships and what these interactions mean. I am lucky to live in a time and place where I am not pressured to be someone I am not. This freedom, unique to my own circumstances, allows me to do something that nourishes me as a creative person and as a human being.

Extended Narrative

Viola Davis at the Emmys: Valerie Macon / AFP / Getty Images

For Want of a Mirror

by Jesse Adigwe

Many years ago, I was told a parable in school about a dog and cat that lived together in a house with no mirrors. The dog and cat had no idea that they were different. The dog thought that it must look just like the cat and the cat thought the same. It was not until mirrors were introduced into the house that the dog and cat realized they were different, and conflict arose. They began to fight and their newly learned differences became sources of anger and resentment.

I've always thought of children as being the same as the dog and the cat. Children do not know that they are different from each other, only that they are both humans. They do not know of perceived superiorities or inferiorities; they have a purer vision of this world. It is only when they are taught by society about these invented superiorities and inferiorities that they begin to become warped; changed from their originally-pure perception. Children are born without complexes, and it is not until complexes are ingrained in them by the adults of this world, and the media that they have access to, that these notions of difference manifest in the forms of racism, sadness, anger, and guilt.

As a child, I loved to read. I loved to read fantasy books, books about animals, books about kids just like me doing extraordinary things. I loved to place myself in the minds and worlds of these characters and pretend that I was doing the things that they were doing. Frequent trips to the library found me bringing home bags full of novels from authors all over the world. I also loved to watch the films adapted from these books; films like *Harry Potter* and *Eragon*.

These films allowed me to gain a visual representation of the stories that I had known so well. The very first film adaptation that I watched was *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. I remember it all quite well, as it was released on my birthday and it felt like the universe was giving me a truly wonderful present. Reading *Harry Potter* as child I would imagine myself as him, attending Hogwarts and going on all sorts of adventures. When the movie was released I could visualize myself even more clearly, with a vivid representation of everything I read.

I did this with many books I read: *Artemis Fowl, Pendragon, Alex Rider*, among many others. One of my favourite writers during this time was Cornelia Funke. I had all her books, and had even received *Dragon Rider* as a Christmas present from my mother that year. There was one of her books, *Inkspell*, that I remember quite well. Perhaps to say that I remember it quite well is a bit of an exaggeration, but there is one scene I have never forgotten, even though I read *Inkspell* more than ten years ago. The group of protagonists in the fantasy land that *Inkspell* is set in are sitting around the fire discussing what the requirements are for a hero. They name many which were even obvious to me, a child of nine, such as brave, courageous, handsome, honourable. These types of scenes were present in many books I read, and I paid no special attention. It was not until later in the scene that I was grabbed; a moment that changed my perception of media forever.

As the heroes sat around the fire listing the requirements for one to be a hero, a requirement was listed that I had never heard before. "A hero must be pale". I still remember the pit in my stomach when I read that line. Here I was, nine years old, full of imagination and a desire to be the hero on my own adventure, being told by renowned children's author Cornelia Funke that a hero must be pale. I wasn't pale, but I wanted

to be a hero nonetheless. And when I looked around I realized she was right. All the ones I idolized, the protagonists of all the books that I read; Harry Potter, Eragon, Pendragon, Artemis Fowl, Frodo. When I read this line, it was my first foray into the world as it is, rather than how I imagined it.

This scene in *Inkspell* for me was my mirror. I had often dreamed of starring in my own fantasy films, of kids just like me imagining themselves in my stories, and now I really did question if that was a possibility. It had never really occurred to me before that moment. Must a hero be pale? Are darker characters forever destined to be placed in the background as the comedic best friend, or the pinch of variety necessary to appease the masses, yet far enough away from the centre not to disturb the natural balance of things? These are questions I asked myself, questions that were foreign to me, as such a thought had never occurred. Of course, I knew that I was an African-Canadian child in a predominantly Caucasian country, but I never imagined that I had worse odds at doing anything than anyone else. It was discovery of this mirror that built cynicism within me. A slight cynicism at first, but a cynicism nonetheless.

The town of Ajax, where I was born and raised, has a larger African-Canadian population percentage than any other town or city in Canada. Despite this I was one of seven black students in my graduating elementary class of nearly one hundred. I never saw myself as different than any of my classmates in the younger grades, but by the time I was middle school aged the mirror had been fully revealed. The number of black students had drastically increased come high school, as Ajax itself had seen its population swell immensely; but by then the rhetoric had already been fully instilled.

There was quite the divide in my high school, in terms of which groups were in the gifted and advanced classes and which were not. I had always found it striking that there could be such a clear divide in a town that had become as diverse as Ajax had, but then I thought back to the eighth grade, when teachers had to decide which recommendations to give to parents, in terms of which streams that they should follow once they get into high school; applied versus academic.

I had always been a fairly bright child, but math was never my strong suit, and I often averaged in the high sixties to mid-seventies in these courses; with a smattering of grades in the low eighties. All my other grades were in the mid-eighties, and I had a seventy-seven percent average on my eighth-grade report card. My mother was shocked to find that my teacher had inexplicably recommended that I take all applied courses in high school. The significance of this is that you can only apply to University, and then graduate school, with academic courses.

While there of course is nothing wrong with applied courses and college education, (many professions are best achieved through college education rather than the theoretical approach that university provides) college did not at all match the ambitions that I had presented nor did applied courses match the capabilities that I had shown in school. When my mother called to enquire why I was given this designation, the principal did not give a real answer, only that there was nothing wrong with the applied stream and that her own son was in applied. One thing I learned about people is that whenever they must use someone close to them to give a justification for something that was said or something that was done you have reason to be suspicious. The other thing she said was that if I find the applied designation too easy once I get into high school, I can always upgrade. What she didn't say is how huge the gap in difficulty is between the applied and academic streams in high school, and how hard it can be to catch up.

Many of my peers with similar grades to me were given the academic designation which was what left me so confused. If it was not for my mother advocating for me and visiting my school to meet with my teacher, I would not be writing this today, let alone a graduate student and my life would have travelled in a completely different direction. Streamlining children and telling them what they can do at the ages of twelve and thirteen is inherently dangerous. I have many friends who didn't do well in these applied courses simply because they weren't challenged and this lack of challenge resulted in a lack of interest. I was lucky enough to have a mother who was a teacher and a graduate student who knew of my ambitions and knew what would limit my options, or at least what would slow me down.

After discovering the mirror, events like this were common for me; though it is unclear if these events had been occurring my entire life or if they had

ramped up once I had approached adulthood. When I was eleven years old, slightly before the previous event, I had uncovered the second half of the mirror. In keeping with my love of fantasy films and fantasy books, I also developed a love of fantasy games. My brothers, friends and I would play games such as *Runescape* and *World of Warcraft*, and I was always looking for a new role playing game to experience. Role playing games allowed me to project myself into the character as I would with my books and films as child in a much more concrete fashion. I'd make the character look like myself and have names similar to mine. The same was the case with a game I learned about through one of my friends, called *Adventure Quest*.

A low-budget side scroller, based in Java, *Adventure Quest* lacked the expansive nature of *Runescape* or *Warcraft*, but its highly-detailed characters and its many different character customization options made it enjoyable. One day my friend who had introduced me to the game came over to my house to play it. We had been a few months in, and both our characters were fairly developed. It was then he asked me a question that I left me rather shocked. He was a darker lad like myself, of South Asian descent, while I am Nigerian. As we played he turned and said to me "Why is your character black? It's supposed to be your dream character!". At first I was stunned. I had always wondered why his character was white but never thought to ask, until I shot back with a confused and angry "Because I'm black, why is your character white?". There was a pause of awkward silence as he just shrugged meekly and went back to playing his game.

Before then I hadn't quite realized that there were other people that thought this way. That other people believed that a hero must be pale. With the mirror fully uncovered I began to develop an anger, an irritation with the world and the way it was programmed to work. An irritation with Harry Potter, with Cornelia Funke, and with Alex Rider. I still watched these fantasy films however, as they had not yet become completely unbearable. As a method of protest, I started writing my own books. Books starring people who were like me, books starring heroes that were of minority backgrounds, like my own, as for the first time I realized that I really wasn't like Harry Potter, not in the ways that were important, as designated by the world that we live in.

Looking back now, those stories were generic and terrible, but such can be expected from a twelve-year-old with no experience in writing a novel. I started around five, and finished none; getting as far as halfway in the last one that I worked on, at the age of fourteen. It was around this time that I started to become interested in Japanese comics and read them often. I would read around twenty at a time, patiently waiting for the weekly updates every evening. I stopped reading many of these comics due to the way that they depicted black people. This form of racism was much more obvious however, with a character in *Air Gear* literally being named "Black Pig", and a character in *Shaman King* being named Chocolove McDonnel; an ex criminal from America with disturbingly exaggerated facial features who was saved by a Caucasian man and now dresses in native African garb with dreams of becoming a comedian.

It was these comics that made me realize that it wasn't just in our media here that these things existed, but everywhere that darker skinned people were a minority. These realizations caused the mirror to twist and distort. It was not until I saw the art of my younger brother that the mirror grew clear again. An artist even as a child, he would create fantastical visual pieces with people who looked like him, that lacked any of the ugly stereotypes that the media had peppered us with.

He had discovered his own mirror, but this discovery served not as a point of resentment, but as a source of inspiration. It became clear to me that the people who were making these films, writing these books, drawing these comics, and making these movies did not look like me, and therefore were most likely not going to create stories starring people who looked like me. Why go against the grain when you've been taught that such a concept is not the norm and has no value in being explored?

It was then, at the age of fourteen, that I decided to create my own, visual content. I decided that it wasn't enough to simply read about people who looked like you, you had to see them as well. I started to draw my first comic at that time, a comic that followed a similar theme to the many comics that were already in existence; with the difference being that the hero wasn't pale. A difference that sounds small when read on paper, but makes all the difference when you see that character in every scene, and you are reminded in every scene that that character

looks like you; that you could be that character.

In recent years we have seen many niche stories pop up that star black and minority characters, as a sort of offering to appease a newly-aware populace. But these characters are not given nearly as much push as their Caucasian counterparts. The likelihood of seeing a Miles Morales movie (the afro-latino Spiderman) while Peter Parker is alive and well is rather small; to understand this one must only look back at all backlash that Donald Glover received when people were touting him as the next Spiderman.

There is still a significant barrier for those who would wish to star in films and television shows in an industry that is dedicated to maintaining the status quo. Many individuals even boycotted the 2016 Academy Awards due to a lack of minority representation in the nominees. Although Jada Pinkett-Smith started this boycott presumably after her husband Will did not receive a nomination for his film, *Concussion*, it was the Emmy-winning actress, Viola Davis, who truly captured the problem with the Academy Awards, and show business in general when she said "You cannot win an Emmy for roles that are simply not there".

It is not necessarily that black actors who are starring in amazing films are not being nominated (unfortunately, Will Smith's Nigerian accent in *Concussion* was rather terrible), but a larger issue that Davis spoke of. There are simply not enough roles. While history was made by having a black lead in a Star Wars movie, the industry still limits its lead role selection to Caucasian actors. A Hollywood writer who spoke to my class had said that this was because unless the race was specified in the script or casting call, every actor is assumed to be Caucasian. However, even when the script or the original adaptation calls for an actor of a particular ethnicity, these roles are also often given to Caucasian actors.

One must only look at Johnny Depp as Tonto in the *Lone Ranger,* Emma Stone as Allison Ng in *Aloha,* the entire water trib/e in *The Last Airbender,* the Egyptians in *The Gods of Egypt*, Jake Gyllenhaal in *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* or Scarlett Johansson as Motoko Kusanagi in the soon-to-be-released *Ghost in the Shell.* Many people in the industry will tell you that these films must star Caucasian actors because the biggest stars are Caucasian and their star power is needed to push the film. The major problem with this is that stars are not born, they're made; actors are handpicked to become stars by being given the best roles in the biggest films. This argument creates a perfect lock; a catch-22 that prevents minority actors from starring in any of Hollywood's big features; even when those features call for an actor within their particular ethnicity.

Despite these setbacks, at the age of twenty-two I am filled with hope, as interwoven within these setbacks lie pockets of progress. Actor's like Aziz Ansari, Viola Davis, John Boyega, and Lupita Nyong'o are symbols of this progress. So is my younger brother, myself, and the new generation of socially aware content creators who will find their way into the Hollywood and television industries and create stories about heroes who look like them. If I am lucky enough to find myself as one of those able to penetrate this industry I would be ecstatic, but being able to look on at those who could do what I could not would still provide me with immense satisfaction.

It has now been a decade since the mirror was fully uncovered for me, and while I cannot say that I am completely at peace with it, I can say that I no longer see it as a point of resentment. Much like my younger brother, I now see it as a source of inspiration. A driving force that makes me want to create content for children who were just like myself, so they can see themselves as heroes. So that people who look like me will be able to dress up on Halloween and cosplay as these characters knowing that no one could question their suitability to the role. Even if nothing I create is able to rise to the top I am confident that people like my younger brother will be able to achieve this goal. When I am older, I will tell my children the parable of the cat, the dog, and the mirror, for I am confident that when they discover the mirror it will serve as point of inspiration, rather than a source of resentment.

The politics of the 1960's and Amiri Baraka's Play *Dutchman*

by Chante Barnwell

In Amiri Baraka's, off-Broadway play *Dutchman*, power is constantly at war with control when contextualizing the racialized and socially constructed identity of the1960s through the stereotyped interplay of the main characters: Clay, a black 20-something middle class man, and Lula, a white 30-something dominating woman .[1] The presence of power and its relationship

to control is contextualized through the first and last scenes in the film adaptation of *Dutchman*. In this essay, I will analyze the train window encounter that occurs at the beginning of the play between Lula and Clay.

In addition to this, I will complete my analysis with a commentary on the film's ending scene, which, significantly, presents the train conductor as a reflection of the first encounter between Lula and Clay. The cyclical aspect of *Dutchman's* narrative provides the basis for a contextualized debate about power vs. control in 1960s America, and also its role in constructing a socialized identity, to which both characters subscribe. In the play, Baraka presents a clear commentary on the frictions that were strongly apparent in the American social order of the 1960s era. In America at the time, there was a feeling in the air that presented the instability of a changing society, on one hand recognizing the triumphs that could stand ahead and on the other hand holding on to the contentious history that still lingered.

Particularly the year 1964 presented a time in America when the political system had been flipped on its head. Lyndon B. Johnson was elected president after holding the role of Democratic vice-president, and he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which had originally been introduced by President John F. Kennedy before his assassination.[2] The Civil Rights Act was introduced after a long battle by civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who led the charge to confront the racially prejudiced acts that black communities across America faced through various forms of segregation and discrimination, contrary to basic human rights. The act declared an end to "segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or national origin"[3] and it was and still is considered one of the "legislative achievements of the civil rights movement."[4]

An article written by Jeremy Mayer, an associate professor in Policy and Government at George Mason University[5] entitled *LBJ Fights the White Backlash: The Racial Politics of the 1964 Presidential Campaign,* was published in a magazine produced by the American National Archives and Records Administration. Mayer states, "The election of 1964 is considered by many to be the most racially polarized presidential contest in modern American history at that time."[6] The article goes on to say that President Johnson feared Barry Goldwater, the Republican opponent who lost to him during the election, because he felt that he "would exploit the racial turmoil evident at the time by appealing to the "white backlash" which occurred in response to the signing of the Civil Rights Act amongst other things. This racially charged backlash started as a condemning of the race- and integration-centered agenda President Kennedy put forward during his time in office.[7] During the talks of a large "white backlash", there were riots all over America and many calls to revoke the 1964 Civil Rights Act.[8] Contrary to the idea that riots were more dominant in the south because of the concentrated acts of segregation, they were also prevalent in the northern states, particularly New York.[9] Mayer states, "Two weeks after the greatest legislative victory for racial equality since Reconstruction, Harlem erupted in rioting… some saw the end of racial liberalism."[10]

The *New York Times* reported the rioting in an article published in 1964 entitled *Violence Flares Again in Harlem*. The article states, "Violence broke out in Harlem for the second time within 24 hours last night, and at least 19 persons were injured."[11] The killing of a 15-year-old boy named James Powell by a white officer named Lieutenant. James Gilligan specifically triggered the Harlem riots, reflecting the political climate I previously discussed. The riots started as a rally to protest the killing of Powell.[12] It was initiated by the Congress of Racial Equality, which was defined as an **"**interracial American organization" created by James Farmer and others in 1942 to improve race relations and end discriminatory policies.[13] The rally was held a few days after Powell's funeral, which was reportedly attended by 1,000

residents on the outside of the service and 150 residents who attended the funeral proceedings. The newspaper described the rally's atmosphere and weather as "hot and humid"[14], with the crowds described as "desultory."[15]

After the rally finished a few people decided to march down to the police station where Lieutenant Gilligan was working; they demanded his arrest but failed in their attempts.[16] Their demands triggered more days of unrest and opposition from the police department and the government, both organizations citing the need for law and order.[17] By the time the riots were over the police declared that the events that took place were the "act of criminals"[18]and the police commissioner at the time, Michael J. Murphy, as well as other black leaders, "pleaded for restraint".[19] Murphy stated there would be "a full investigation of the Powell shooting."[20]

All this social unrest in America was the backdrop for Amiri Baraka when creating the play *Dutchman*. It is clear that the play feeds off the racially charged frustration that arose out of the Civil Rights Movement. Amiri Baraka, named Everett Le Roi Jones by his parents, was born in 1934 in Newark, New Jersey.[21] His mother was a social worker and his father a postal worker, and his family life was defined as having a "middle class outlook." [22] He ridiculed the values of his parents' generation, calling their viewpoints "false consciousness", and during that time, he found that the black middle class in America subscribed to a "Black Bourgeoisie" attitude or upper class way of life.[23]

He studied at Rutgers University in Newark from 1951 to 1952 on a science scholarship but switched to Howard University, a historically black university, because of his upbringing and the racial tensions at the time.[24] He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1954, studying English literature, Philosophy, German and Religion.[25] His dislike for the "Black Bourgeoisie" was heightening during his time at Howard. He felt that Howard pushed black people into "self-destruction", not realizing that "society had forced them into a great sickness…" [26]

Baraka enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1954, and was a weatherman and gunner in Puerto Rico. Baraka was influenced by the poetry in a magazine entitled *The Black Mountain Review,* featuring many poets Baraka claimed to be his contemporaries, including one creator of the magazine, Charles Olson.[27] The magazine closed and most of the contributors and writers went to New York's Greenwich Village.[28] This was the place where Baraka flourished as a literary force, confirmed his viewpoints, and continued his fight against the Black Bourgeoisie, taking on more of a bohemian stance and outlook on life. After he returned from serving his time in the U.S. Air Force, he married his first wife.

In March 1958, Jones and his wife published the first issue of *Yugen,* a magazine of poetry and literature, which ran for eight issues. This publishing venture and the ones to follow solidified the level of respect he had for the advancement of literature and success of the Greenwich Village art scene.[29] Baraka went through some major changes during the time of writing *Dutchman:* he separated from his wife, who was of Jewish heritage, moved back to Harlem, and became a black nationalist, more widely known as a Pan-Africanist.[30]

The most significant change that took place was his urgent need to establish a new name.[31] He was known around "the village" as "Roi"[32] and wanted to separate himself from a name he felt was connected to slavery, and embrace his ancestral understanding of blackness by identifying a name with African cultural origins. He was given the name *Ameer Barakat,* meaning "the Blessed Prince", then changed the first half of his name to Amiri, and the pronunciation of his last name, which had Swahili roots.[33]

The stance he had on changing his name was a widespread occurrence in America at the time and was most famously headed by "Malcolm Little"[34] who became known as political leader Malcolm X and then Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.[35] The movement of that time provided a space for radical black artists. In the essay entitled *Lift up yr self!' Reinterpreting Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), Black Power,* and *the Uplift Tradition*, author Daniel Matlin argues that most artists including Baraka seized the time to "assert the importance of their work to the elevation of revolutionary black consciousness."[36]

His consciousness was translated into another role, the founder of an organization called BARTS, which stood for Black Arts Repertory Theatre School, and was said to be an "experiment in community mobilization that vitally influenced the development of black revolutionary art and politics".[37] This exper-

iment led him to be a leading founder of the Black Arts Movement. The Black Arts Movement is best defined as a group of "citizen artists" responding to a repressive society.[38] The main goal of the movement was to create literature that changed "the ideological patterns of the American political, social, and cultural landscape of the 1960's."[39]

Amiri Baraka opened his play in March of 1964 at the Cherry Lane Theatre[40], and although the Harlem riots occurred in July a few months later it is as if Baraka's work foreshadowed the hostility and violence that was bubbling to the surface of society at the time. In same year, he received the Obie theatre Award for *Dutchman* and a Guggenheim Fellowship.[41] An interesting fact is that while Baraka made *Dutchman*, he was contributing to five other plays; this demonstrated his tenacity by placing him in the public sphere as the leading black playwright of his time.[42] Baraka stands as a "seminal figure in contemporary black literature" and "the most controversial, the most militant (although it has been argued that he would not subscribe to that definition), the most revolutionary, and the most explosive black playwright."[43] I would agree with most of these sentiments and add that his explosiveness as a playwright is a result of his lived experience and the way he directly attacks race relations with no pretence.

In 1967, Anthony Harvey, a British director, actor and editor, made the film adaptation of *Dutchman*. [44] The experience he gained directing the short film gave him a significant career boost.[45] A New York Times article entitled '*Hold On to That Shot,' Kubrick Said,* a reflection on the life of Harvey, stated that the film was made in six days and it became "critically acclaimed".[46] The main actor was Al Freeman Jr., who played Clay; actress Shirley Knight, who was the wife of the producer Gene Persson[47], and played Lula, won the Golden Lion Best Actress award at the Venice Film Festival for her work in the film adaptation.[48]

I felt the setting was faithful to the description of the original, but held a slight difference from the characteristics reminiscent of a theatre production. My initial perspective was supported by the film reviews at the time, but not with all the praise that you would expect, due to the various financial circumstances that surrounded the film's production. The filmmaking came with financial drawbacks, with a twenty-thousand dollar budget for its creation.[49] The film received funding from the British government after a long battle with the distributor and with transit authorities for staging a film shoot in publicly-used trains with inherently violent subject matter (due to *Dutchman*'s political content).[50] The distributors felt the short length of the film would not fit the requirements needed to play in their movie theatres.[51] To increase the run of the film in theatres they had to show *Dutchman* with two short documentaries.[52]

In June of 1968, a year after the film was made, critic Roger Ebert had liked the content of the film but felt that the length of the play limited its strength.[53] He stated, "In the theater, limitations of time and space usually make a production seem more immediate. In the movies, on the other hand, we're used to time being stretched or compressed, but we rarely find it recorded exactly as it passes."[54]

When viewing the film adaptation of *Dutchman,* we are confronted with the contrast of black and white imagery for which the film was produced. The opening scene starts with dreary piano music, then suddenly we hear the sharp sounds of clinking bottles, almost crashing against the wrong notes on a piano. These sounds grab the audience's attention and provide an uneasy feeling. A long panning motion of the camera shows the subway platform from different angles.

Then we see the first character, Lula, leaning back on the wall, slightly blending into her surroundings, with the geometrical pattern of the dull lighting in the station matching the black and white stripes on her dress. The train barrelling into the station pushes the movie title *Dutchman* to the viewer's attention and adds the sound of a screeching train to the overloading collection of sounds that confront the viewer. When the train stops, we see Clay reading a newspaper, dressed up in a suit and casually glancing out the window. He spots Lula and they make eye contact. Clay looks up again and the train continues on the journey to its next destination.

The viewer is now startled as Lula appears in the back of the train car, peering at Clay in a manner that establishes their relationship in one wide shot. The audience is aware in that moment that Clay is the subject of her intentions: what we come to find out later is that her intentions are to murder Clay and it all stems from their intense argument around stereotypes and race. For example, when she sits

beside Clay after they exchange glances with one another, she asserts her position while at the same time seeming shy by stating,

"I'm going to sit down .... OK?"[55]

In this one line, we are presented with the dynamics of power and control. Lula controls the situation by asserting the feminine stereotype that Clay assumes of her, while establishing a demanding tone. This sentiment is echoed by other scholars who state that Lula's assertive role demonstrates "active (male) agency, which appears in her manipulation and scripting of the rhetoric in the play."[56]

I was instantly aware in *Dutchman,* especially in the film adaptation, that the setting placed an emphasis on confinement. I felt this confinement paralleled the feelings that Baraka had in his life, as well as the conversations that Lula had with Clay throughout the play.

In the original theatre production of *Dutchman,* the train is discussed with lot of detail: the script states the "Train roars"[57] and "Lights flash outside the windows."[58] This description personifies the transit system, making the space take on a phenomenological effect. This effect is even portrayed by the characters, as both Clay and Lula lose track of their temporal and emotional bearings as the journey on the train progresses. What I found most interesting about the play is how Baraka places an African-American male in the role of the conductor. I felt that this choice demonstrates a subversion of the metaphor with which a train conductor is associated.

The irony in his choice brings up various questions: who is in control of the outcome or in this case the "destination", within a given situation? How does this change if "choice'' is presented as a means of escape, within the roles of the oppressed and the oppressor? Furthermore, if the person leading the train is identified as "oppressed", do they automatically hold the power within the situation? Alternatively, is the illusion of power simultaneously associated with lack of foresight, and, inevitably, loss of control?

I would argue that in the play the precognition of Clay only prepared him for his demise; the oppressive internalized environment of the train and the externalized illusion of liberty, which flickered through his windowpane, station by station, actually predetermined this demise. The ideology behind external and internal elements of control become juxtaposed and we become more aware of this as the conversation moves away from the hyper-sexualized exchange of Clay and Lula and goes further into the social-political relationship that they share. We come to understand their relationship not only within the parameters of their race but also within the parameters of their contested national history and identity.

In Baraka's later years, he lived a normal life after his involvement with political movements and activism. He opened a community arts center with his second wife, held the post of poet laureate for a while in New Jersey and taught as a full time professor at Stony Brook University in New York, until his death in 2014 at the age of 79.[59] The relevance of *Dutchman* presented itself on the 50th anniversary of its original showing in 2014, where the play was re-staged by the National Black Theatre of America. The play was welcomed by old and new audiences, and included the distant flashing of lights that had once personified the subway train in 1964.[60] We can assume that Baraka would have loved to see this and would have had ample commentary on the way it turned out. Although I do not agree with all the implications that Baraka placed within his works and activism, I would agree that *Dutchman* stands the test of time when it comes to understanding race relations in America during the 1960s, and how this understanding could be applied to the complexity of race as it is perceived today.

I swear it made sense five minutes ago

by Beatriz Campos

There is no beginning. Three hours looking at a computer screen, writing and erasing all words that come to mind should have been a sign. My back already hurts because I have no studying chair and Ikea has a comfort limit. I look at my middle paragraphs, a charming ending, but the beginning is still poor, lost and pleading to be swiftly killed by pressing the delete button. I could bring out the Doctor

Frankenstein in me, stitch together parts of something that was once a text, demanding it to come alive. However, the sky is as clear as my mind.

The sun is setting. I've spent the whole afternoon trying to work on this assignment and by consequence nothing else got done. I think I see something moving in the corner of my eye, but that is just the shadow of the moving truck passing by. I get up, open the kitchen cupboard and take out my 8-cup espresso maker that has been waiting for me all day. Recently she has become that lover you know you want to call but only do when you start getting desperate.

It takes ten minutes for the coffee to be made. Cleaning the dishes from the lunch that you made with the rest of whatever food you have is productive. But the water hasn't boiled yet, should have made more of a mess before. It is too late to turn on the vacuum even though the old Chinese couple would not even know it was on. The bathroom: desperate people throw water in their faces and look at themselves in the mirror. The same shadow from before comes crossing in the corridor behind me.

It is still hiding itself. Good, I don't have time to worry about it, the water finally boiled. Time is passing and I'm still procrastinating. How long has this almond milk been open? Still smells okay, so that's a go. Milk, sugar, coffee, some tea biscuits with Nutella. Am I trying to give myself strength or give up on my body as well as my work?

Focus woman, focus. I move from the table to the sofa, as an argument that I need more comfort or I won't be able to continue working. We all know this is a lie and the step to a "needed nap in the best of intentions", as it has been proven by research that I have seen in the last social media post I opened. Let's write, rewrite, erase the first paragraph, maybe insert a picture, recycle something I said before. It is sitting right by me. Looking at me as I write.

There is a sound coming from it, but it is still a white noise. It's not bothersome, I repeat to myself as the focus on my paper has vanished and I'm looking at it from the corner of my eye. I get up again and go take a look at my cellphone: no messages, nothing. I wished a certain person had messaged me, but… I bumped into it. It was sitting on the floor, now it's behind my back, not letting me pass.

Whatever; I wasn't going to finish the paper today anyway. I look down at my cellphone again and send some messages, not to a certain person, I'm better than that. However, as a great irony of destiny – or the presence of the thing right by me – everyone is busy or far away.

"You know they don't care, right?"

And so it speaks. Like Medusa, don't look into its eyes or you're doomed. It is bigger than before. I like to compare to No Face from *Spirited Away*, to make it less frightening in my head. It will say something again but I go first. "They are busy, they would have gone out if there was time."

"So you better start making an effort then. You should have planned things instead of leaving them until the last minute."

Ouch, that was fast and on point. I make the effort. I'm always making the effort. I'm the one that calls people to do things. There's a spontaneity to last minute calls, it feels more alive and meaningful that way. At least I think so.

"You're not making enough effort then, or you're just being taken for granted again. That wouldn't be the first time, you know."

Of course, I know. You keep reminding me every time I'm talking to someone that I have some kind of interest in. There is no single friendship that you don't come around to talk me out of. The fact that I don't have a romantic life is probably because of you.

"No, it's because of you. You're the person that they gave up on."

No, I'm not going there again. While I was being the best person that I could have been, they took advantage and I was the one fucked up in the end! I am a good person; I don't deserve this. Me first, always.

"So don't put yourself through it again. Focus on your

work that you're already not able to pull off. Have priorities, people are just making you stray and procrastinate. Maybe you should have stayed at home. Smaller pond, smaller fishes, you know."

I came here to get out of the small pond. I can't learn new things if I stay where I already know like the back of my hand, and I need people to avoid having you around all the time. And… my phone vibrates. How long have I been standing here? Oh, the certain person answered me and is busy. Well, today is that kind of day.

"Like every other day."

Shut up. I have to remember that people here have different social dynamics. Even back home they wouldn't always decide what they were going to do until just a few hours before the events. I can't expect to have the luxury of someone jumping on my crazy train of ideas head first. And the transit system sucks.

"*Don't you think this is going to be harder than you thought? Staying here, dealing with people that know nothing of your background, setting up such high goals for yourself in such a short amount of time? You have one year to decide if you're staying here, you don't feel like home, but home also is not home anymore.*"

I know. This is not an easy answer. I'm here already, might as well keep going, to give up would be even worse than suffering another eight months. For someone with social anxiety I still have a lot of pride in me. I can just pretend I'm fine with my parents and friends, focus on getting it done and then see if something works out in the summer. I will end up as the bright kid who lost her mind and came home to be a failure. If things become too hard just ditch the attempt at a social life, I did that before, can do that again.

"*I wonder if going back is so bad in the end.*"

There is no work for me, I'd become a teacher trying to pay the bills in an expensive city, fighting to get government funding in a decadent economy. The worst part is trying to work in a closed-minded creative environment. I already got a project rejected because "although my curriculum was fantastic I was too young for it".

"*But your friends are there. Which is more important? Work or having someone to cry to?*"

If I have my friends I'll get frustrated that I'm not doing anything interesting, if I have the work I'll be lonely to not have people who I feel understand me. I can talk with people back home from time to time, but it's so different to have someone in the flesh than just a camera. Not judging me when I just need to rant you out of my mind, you know? I worry about my mental health.

"*You're already having a crisis and worrying about your mental health. Funny.*"

Tell me something new. As if I'm not always aware when you're coming around, I just don't have any control over it. Why is my back hurting? Oh yeah, I've been standing here holding this phone since forever. Should I answer that person? Should I give it a go again? Should I even give it the time of day when I know it's not mutual? Waste your time with people because you need emotional back up. Way to go.

"*You could just tell everything and end it all at once. Get it over with and go on with your* life."

No! Why would I do that? If I like someone this is not how I'm supposed to act, they'll think I'm crazy. Although, yeah, I would love to have direct answers for everything in life and not play games, but that would require the world to be less complicated and we all know social stress is a thing. Maybe, if I were born here everything would be different, English would not be a problem, wouldn't feel alone, would be a privileged person without any social guilt in the back of my head. Wouldn't have to always worry if I'm being the person that is too dumb to write a text that makes sense.

"*If you were able to swallow your pride and deal with the normal life you would be happier, would not be here suffering because of other people and getting hit in the face all the time.*"

Yes. We have had this talk since you starting showing up. I really wish I liked other things such as having a job in the public service, could have been a lawyer, maybe a doctor for the sake of the family name. Be well paid, do my job, marry an all right guy that doesn't get out of his comfort zone, travel in the summer with the two kids. Maybe I should just accept that this life was not made for me, the stakes

are too high and I'm already dealing with them. Is all of this worth the mind struggle I have constantly? Is it worth the no sleep nights, the cold sweat that comes down every time I get a mark back? Is it worth the crisis I'm having right now?

If I treated my work as my hobby, I would probably have more ups than downs, and I wouldn't be worrying if there are jobs for me or not. Happily be born and die in the same city, without changing anything, just being. Happy.

"*There, there.*"

The thing embraces me. It is a warm hug, similar to the feeling when you come home from a long day, take off your shoes, have a nice bath and then sleep without having to wake up early in the morning. I want to drown in its dark body, it's so cozy in here. Melancholic, but cozy.

"*You don't have to deal with those emotions, they just overwhelm you. Understand that everything will hurt you. Then you can be ready. People are mean. You know that because you are mean. It is such a waste of breath if you care and show emotions.*"

The hug gets even tighter and it's making it difficult to breathe properly. My hands are trembling. It's still cozy either way. I need to cleanse myself of emotions and release expectations. If you don't care for someone or something you don't get hurt along the way, it's safer. Why am I crying? I am so tired, I need to sleep, but I'm still in the embrace. How long have I been here? When did I move to the sofa again? Wasn't I holding my phone a while ago?

It won't let go of me. It is warm but I am tired of trembling, I need to breathe. Just let go of me, I learnt my lesson. I don't even have more tears to shed, I'm dry of everything and emotions. You're making me more overwhelmed than the paper I was supposed to be writing. Oh, the paper. What was the problem with it again? There was no beginning, but the middle and end wouldn't work with a different one. They are the important part in all of this as the way it starts is always unclear, how we get there and the aftermath are the focus. Hmm, I'm not that bad of a writer. Not as good as I wanted but I've seen worse from people more "prepared".

The embrace is not that warm anymore and it's heavy. This is becoming bothersome. I am feeling things again, the numbness it provided me has faded away. I look up from my

situation and see the apartment the same way it always is; however, snow is falling outside the window. I hate snow, but it's a sign that the year is ending. Like the first rain in September back home, after months of dryness, a little hope from Mother Nature reminding us things change in the blink of an eye.

My anxiety is the size of a small child now, sitting on my shoulders. I don't know how it came down to it, I don't know how long this panic attack has been happening to me, although I feel it will stay there for a while, reminding me and whispering bad things into my ear. There is no more trembling, just the heavy breathing of someone who ran a marathon. I am better now, the panic made sense at the time, but they were just arguments to run and hide. I will not run and hide, but maybe just take it easy from now on.

I change a few things in my assignment, save and send it for correction. The coffee I made is cold now, so I make some tea. My friend sent a message telling me I could go to the suburbs if I wanted to, she had the car that night. How did it all begin again?

Home-Bound

by Sarah Claydon

I try not to recall the time I brought home the guy from Sneaky Dee's. I've gotten over the fact that we tried to have sex three times, unsuccessfully. I'd rather not admit when I saw him again he had no idea who I was, but I've had worse. Rather, it's the thought of my roommates the following morning, coming downstairs groggy-eyed from a restless sleep, sporting that I'm-so-pissed-I'm-taking-

my-coffee-to-go look, that still makes me cringe. I wanted to apologize, but I was too uncomfortable. No one wants to talk about their sex life. Especially with their parents.

When I was a kid, I stalked my mom and dad. Anytime they found a way to escape my clutches, the rule was they had to give me notice so my last words could be "I love you." I was terrified of them dying. Every night like clockwork, I would cry when they put me to bed, citing reckless abandonment and negligence. Never enough cuddling. Most of my memories from childhood are of me sneaking downstairs in my footed pajamas, settling in the shadows, clenching my body tightly for fear of making a sound, only to watch my parents watch TV. So, literally do nothing. At the time this felt like the world's greatest treachery. I couldn't believe I was defying them like this night after night, but it was only fair. Now, I cling to the idea that my bedroom walls are thick enough to keep them in the dark.

Because unfortunately, Mr. Sneaky Dee was not a one-off. Well he was clearly a one-off, but I've had many encounters of the like in my 24-year lifespan. What's a girl to do, stop having sex until she moves out? I tried that (unwittingly), and then I mysteriously lost my vibrator amongst my mess — which is still disconcerting. Find other ways to cut the tension? I smoked weed, but it made my parents uncomfortable. Drink? Can't afford it. Learn to cook? Test cases show it's a no go unless I leave the kitchen in a state that passes surgical standards (see Christmas cookies 2014.)

My parents recommend I take up reading.

The truth is, I am unbelievably lucky. I couldn't ask for better parents — but there are generational differences that are difficult to negotiate when confronted on a daily basis. (No, I do not get that John Cleese reference, and yes, I am going out at 10pm.) More significantly, I respect my parents, and I love my parents; as such, there's a whole lot I don't want them to know about me. I maintain that for the sake of a strong parent-child relationship, boundaries must be firmly in place. I fear my parents have been exposed to far too many youthful indiscretions, bottom-of-the-bottle shenanigans, to see me with unconditional pride.

My only solace is I am far from alone.

For the first time in at least 130 years, young people between the ages of 18 and 34 are more likely to be living at home with their parents than in any other living arrangement.[1] According to the most recent Statistics Canada census, 42.3 per cent of people in their twenties lived at home in 2011. That's well up from previous generations, including 32.1 per cent in 1991 and 26.9 per cent in 1981.[2] This is largely due to the rising cost of housing, in conjunction with a difficult job market. But there are other factors, like young people waiting longer to get married or move in with a partner, staying in school longer, and traveling more after school.[3]

Like many of my friends, I tick all those boxes. I moved away to Montreal for an undergrad degree at McGill, then came back to Toronto where I saved for my euro-trip. Unable to afford housing and tuition (despite my part-time job), I am again living at home as I pursue my masters, and am confident I will be there for at least the next eternity as I entertain my passion, documentary, as a possible career path. It's already been four years since I left Montreal.

They call us the boomerang generation. My thesaurus offered "backfire", "recoil", "reverse", "rebound", "self –defeating" and the informal "blow up in one's face" as synonyms to flesh out the definition for me.

Although extremely offensive, I concede the lexicographers may be on to something. Moving home after university is like getting back together with your high school boyfriend. It shouldn't happen. He's still the same and will drag you back down with him. It was a long-fought battle to conquer the responsibilities of adult life. Cleaning doesn't come naturally to anyone. I was more evolved living on my own. Self-reliant, I was more conscious of my appetites and notions of self-care, and felt great ownership over

all dimensions of my life. This was a time of yoga and pumpkin seeds. My parents and I communicated less often, and in more formal terms. The weekly call, the occasional text. This distance meant each interaction had more weight and thought. We developed a new type of relationship: one of equals. I did more than just complain, they had more faith in my abilities to be a functional human. When I came home for holidays this dynamic continued. We privileged that time together, and approached every moment with sensitivity.

When I moved back, my parents tried to be less parent-like. I still remember the dinner when my mom announced that we were just "roommates" now. I tried to approach them that way but it seemed categorically impossible.

The fact is my parents are the owners of our home and they are letting me live there rent free. I can't afford groceries, so I eat their food. I can't afford beer so I drink their PC IPA. They are the cosigners for the loan I took out for my masters. In their eyes, in my eyes, in the eyes of the law, I am again their "dependent." My parents have reverted back to their role as caretakers, and I in turn, the taken after.

For reference, the most recent text from my mom: "Lenses ordered. Bed linens washed and 3 loads of laundry done. Isn't your mother great! You have to vacuum your room and give me your stuff for the thrift store. Oh yes and your tan coat is at the dry cleaners! The. Cloth one! Your sheep skin one I need to repair again." Clearly, the problem is not my mother. Sandy is wonderful. And I do take ownership of the fact that I could be proactive and do these things for myself, but this behaviour follows the dynamic we've always had.

Coming back to my childhood home, the space itself was coded with associations. How were we supposed to move beyond our history when every corner of our house is haunted by memories? I come and go from the same door I used to sneak out. We eat dinner at the table where I learned to read, completed my nightly homework, and confessed to a suspension for being drunk at the school dance. The past is the framework under which we're operating, leaving me with the sense of being stuck in time.

One thing that has developed since I left home for university is a hyperawareness of my relation to my parents as their daughter. I sift through old photos: summer camp, high school graduation. My parents appear very different now. Their bodies are more delicate, their sensibilities hardened. I know they say you can't notice people ageing in front of you, but I swear, I notice my parents ageing in front of me. I may be imagining it out of fear, or maybe I'm comparing them to the people I knew as a child - but regardless, to me, they appear to be changing at an exponential rate.

My dad recently broke his ankle and is currently unable to walk. Confined to a wheelchair, he depends on my mother and I to do even the simplest task. I get him a glass of water and our ragged fleece blanket for warmth. Although this time will soon pass and my father will be back on his feet, the experience has awoken a pre-existing condition: my parents are going to die, and rather soon.

At least this is what I find myself thinking what feels like every moment of every day. Living at home, interacting first and foremost with my mom and dad, my role as a child has come to be the most defining aspect of my identity. I think often about what has changed, and what changes await.

Studying journalism and working for a daily news show does not help my fear of dying. Even at work, I traffic in death. But I think facing the truth that everyone and everything will decay and disappear is a gesture towards adulthood. Pivoting away from adolescent self-serving attitudes, I have begun to feel obliged to those who sacrificed so much of their finite time to give me life.

Now, I feel responsible for my parents' happiness. I do my best to shelter them from Trump's presidency and the impending effects. On a personal level, I feel tremendous pressure to make them proud.

Most notably, intent on securing a good job, I now work way harder at school and perform the role of a responsible person to everyone I meet. "Ya, I'm highly experienced in the arts, politics, business, non-profit, for-profit, outreach, inreach, facebook, twitter." I used to lie to them, now I lie for them.

And when I fail to do what I perceive to be the "right thing" by my parents, I feel guilty. When I sleep over at my boyfriend's place – guilt. When I come home high – so much guilt. When I tell them I'm doing homework

but really I'm out partying– guilt, guilt, guilt.

Of course, I never make these feelings known to them. I continue to give them adolescent sass and cheek, the knee-jerk reaction. But when I'm not with them, at the back of my mind is fear of that impending phone call from the hospital — called upon to be their caretaker; called upon to be as good for them as they were for me. That's a pretty tall order.

There seems to be this paradox at play: can't grow up, but must. Living with my parents makes me hyper-aware of the limited time we have together which informs a desire to be a better daughter, but the same conditions make it extremely difficult to flourish - to find my way as an adult.

Help?

I bet I can predict what you're thinking. "What is she on about?" I hear you. Life with the parents definitely has its benefits. My mother is essentially my personal assistant I don't have to pay. In my *Lifetime* bio-pic, she will be played by Stanley Tucci. Without her, I would be totally ill-prepared for lunch, dinner, winter, and I would fail to recoup all insurance claims, tax credits, holiday gift receipts — the works. She also offers unparalleled emotional support. There is no comfort like one's mother. Especially when one's mother is Sandy Claydon.

Besides the obvious financial benefits, on which I depend and from which I find myself in an exceptionally privileged position, living at home has been useful in that it has allowed my parents and I to explore a new pseudo-friendship. My parents will always be authority figures of sorts. There will be reservations. But we're certainly more honest now than we've ever been. If the last time we shared a space on a daily basis was in my adolescent years, my parents would likely assume I was my same 16-year-old self: wishing to be somewhere else at family dinners, waiting to grab a roadie and a cab as soon as possible. But after nightly in-depth conversations about issues that extend beyond the family sphere, I am confident my mom and dad know how much I value them as people.

And having had the time to demonstrate a more mature version of myself, I think my parents feel comfortable letting their guard down. They don't have to constantly be afraid I'm going to up and throw my life away with the first bad influence. The truth is, I look forward to having a Saturday night martini with the parents, gossiping about the various dubious players in our lives, present and past. There is singularly nothing more satisfying than the closed-lip utterance "but don't tell your brothers."

My parents are a good time, and they make for a great couple. I'm told this constantly. "The documentarian and the fashion executive. The tall man and slim woman. Both kind and smart. Retrofitted with a full grown daughter." It does pain me to say this, but I'm cramping their style.

This is especially relevant as my parents enter into a new phase of their life, as retirees. Retirement: a land free of real responsibility and alarm clocks. Say hello to the Bahamas, say goodbye to your kids. At least that's how it is supposed to be.

My mom and dad have worked hard, been good, and deserve to be baby-boomers gone wild. But they can't; I'm totally killing the vibe. Everyone's embarrassed when I catch my parents watching "Masters of Sex", lest it be the real thing. I'm sure this extends to a whole host of activities, pleasures, interests, that I don't know about. Just as I perform for my parents out of discomfort and self-preservation, they undoubtedly do the same for me.

My mom and dad should become crusaders for hemp, and "head south" in a beat up Winnebago. Or maybe they'd be better suited to the countryside, a watercolorist and expert tinkerer with a nose for dry Riesling. They could be bikers, hikers, or Scrabble fanatics. Or maybe they take community classes, and see their friends more. Maybe my mom can finally learn French. Maybe my dad can get to those books. Maybe they can stop having to put me first.

I have come to realize there is no definitive ending to this story. I could speak to the drama, or the daily minutiae; the perks of my current living situation, or its detrimental effects; I could take it macro or focus on my personal experiences. Any would be appropriate, but none would encapsulate all the moving parts. Home is a place saturated with memory, fantasy, desire, love — emotions which accelerate our lives and halt us in our tracks. These experiences are felt, contingent, and bountiful. I struggle to speak to my own self let alone to all millennials living with their parents. Yet, although these emotions are difficult

to capture, they nonetheless set the conditions for who we become, and the space that contains them must be thoughtfully considered.

For better or for worse, home matters.

The Moral Dilemma: Art and Its Artist

by Talia Eylon

When I first became aware that Bill Cosby was accused of multiple rapes, I was saddened and disappointed. Cosby was never an idol for me but I loved his comedy and appreciated the leadership role he appeared to take on. 'Loved' is probably the word I had openly used. There were some jokes that I didn't particularly like. But overall, I enjoyed his work.

In the past, I had frequently reflected on the ethical and moral complexities that arise when a great artist is found to be a terrible person, or has committed horrendous acts. But I had conceded to the temptation to declare it a non-issue. It's a multifaceted problem and complicated enough to dissuade exploration. Yet, I believe that art matters, what people do matters, and "the politics of seeing—how we perceive the visual, how we write about it and talk about it"[1] also matters. Before delving into the moral complexities, the terms of the discussion need to be addressed. The questions of what constitutes art, and how to practice art criticism will be tackled first.

While researching how to interpret art, I observed a 'pick and choose' attitude, where the individual can set his/her own rules and conditions for how to interpret art. This approach is unsatisfactory. Deciding not to impart judgments on appropriate standards releases the individual from any responsibility to advocate for a specific position, "I don't need to defend myself. You think what you want and I'll think what I want." This statement brought forth the decision to challenge the notion that art is devoid of any moral or ethical examination.

So, What Is Art?

There is no universally accepted definition of art. In the encyclopedic book, *The Story of Art,* E. H. Gombrich declared, "There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists."[2] Without guidance on what qualifies as art, we are confronted with many questions. Must art be human-made? Must it be an object or event? Can a concept be art? Jerry Seinfeld believes that, "Anything that you make, out of thin air, that someone else likes, is art."[3] Does art have to be appreciated in a specific way to be deemed art? Is one person's tastes enough to proclaim something as a work of art? What about art that is created from pre-made or found objects, do they qualify? Haven't we seen the definition of art expand and shift over human history? Is art in the eye of the beholder? Should we instead be asking 'what is good art'? Yet, if we are to analyze art, we need to define it.

Harriet Jeffery describes two relational theories for defining art:

1. "There are those who hold that art means the concrete work of art, and that the only legitimate questions are those which may be answered by an analysis of materials, forms, and content."[4]
2. "Then there are those who hold that art is a term summarizing a complex process in which the pre-condition of a given work and the enjoyment of it are not merely essential factors, but more significant than those of internal qualities and creative technique."[5]

Neither theory acknowledges the role of the artist in creating a work of art, although the second theory introduces the position that the process, as well as the experience of the work, is part of the work. Jeffery advocates that these theories can be used together or separately depending on the circumstance. This "pick and choose" attitude is not an option I would support. Although I would agree that both should be used together to define and critique a work of art.

Arnold Berleant makes an important distinction that often goes unsaid, "The painting never seen, the novel never read, are empty of all aesthetic import except potentially, in that they may at some future time be seen or read, that is, activated and thus made to work as art."[6] Here he explains that art belongs solely to the creator until it is made public. Until that moment, questions of artistic merit, responsibility, and art criticism do not apply. (Such analysis doesn't pertain to a diary entry or a home movie. These items may well hold the qualities that we admire in art, but until the point that they become public, they do not belong to the art realm.)

Short of defining art, Berleant claims that, "Whatever else art may be, it lays bare the world and gives us the vision to see it."[7] Anne Bernays argues, "lasting art is neither polite nor charming; it achieves its effect by taking reality to its limits, by agitating the calm."[8] These declarations about successful and impactful artwork are important because they assert a moral claim on the work. Both theorists support the value of honesty and elucidation in art.

During the late 18th century, significant support for the "free play of the creative impulse" became the popular view.[9] Art had previously been strongly limited by moral concerns. Berleant proposes that it was likely a reaction to these constraints that gave birth to "exaggerated claims for the complete independence of artistic activity."[10] This outlook, reaffirmed in the West since the 1960s, awarded artists a special place in society.[11] This attitude can be seen today at universities including Ryerson, where

Fine Arts is free of constraints and is exempt from the Research Ethics Board thesis review. bell hooks supports the uninhibited freedom of expression with the qualifier that, "*all* artists [must] see their work as inherently challenging of those institutionalized systems of domination (imperialism, racism, sexism, class elitism, etc.) that seek to limit, coopt, exploit, or shut down possibilities for individual creative self-actualization."[12] The consensus suggests that anything goes regarding form, medium, subject, content, exploration, and personal expression as long as the purpose is just or justified.

Berleant proposes that some constraint may be applicable to artists when their work has received public support.[13] However, this may raise an issue of inequality. If it is only the artist that we subsidize and may (partially) influence as patrons, then those who are independently wealthy get to be free of any obligations to the public.

And, How Is Art Criticism Being Practiced?

Currently in art criticism, a deliberate and almost total separation has been enforced between the artist and the art piece. In Henry M. Sayre's guide, *Writing About Art*, barely any consideration is given to the artist as an individual or his/her artistic intentions. One of the few sections that deals with the artist addresses artists' statements and exhibition catalogues.[14] Sayre advises that, "artistic statements must be approached with caution."[15] He warns that, intentional or not, the writing may be misguided or simply written badly. His advice is to use it if it supports one's interpretation and disregard if it doesn't. Again, a "pick and choose" attitude is embraced. He also raises the idea, referencing Jackson Pollack's opinion, that language can betray the work. Clearly, most can relate to a deeply impactful experience with an artwork, which was free of any mediation from language. However, it would be a mistake to avoid "betraying" artwork by limiting what or how it can be discussed, as one of art's main purposes is to initiate dialogues.

In Helmut Hungerland's exploration of a universal standard for art criticism, he acknowledges that individual preference and art principles are both valid and non-exclusive approaches to assess art.[16] He wonders, "should one accept the position that each work of art has to be considered by itself, since it is really incomparable with any other?"[17] Jeffery also observed that, "In the past the critic, so disenchanted, has frequently reacted by cultivating his own aesthetic experiences, abandoning all evaluation, subscribing to the doctrine of 'every man to his own tastes,' and telling his readers about his tastes."[18] In response, we can certainly compare works by the same artist, or artists working in the same period, or artists working towards the same goals. Yes, each individual snowflake is special and unique, but not so special and unique that we don't recognize it as a snowflake. And as Isabel C. Hungerland points out, "We are not free to interpret (explain and see) a work of literature in any way we please, because no one can make words mean anything he chooses."[19] Though I. C. Hungerland uses literature as the example, the sentiment applies equally to visual and performative arts. A critic is not free to interpret a photo of a cat on a couch as a group of tourists at a popular beach. The same constraints and freedoms in literary criticism will have equivalents in visual and performative arts.

Helmut Hungerland's solution is to contextualize the art piece. He describes an approach where each work would belong to a class (kind or style) and that each class would have its own standards. The work would then be analyzed within its own style standards.[20] This seems reasonable but is also very restrictive. Comparing works across categories and different periods can be fruitful. Comparing George Carlin's verbal flow to Lauryn Hill's lyrical flow could be a fascinating study. Since a single artwork can be subject to many different types of categorization, it might be fairer to interpret a work by exploring its qualities in relation to the many classes to which it belongs. H. Hungerland's solution does not consider the artist as part of the context of the work.

Jeffery suggests that many facets of an artist's life are irrelevant to his/her work, "while all those aspects which enter into his [or her] creative work are legitimate material for the critic."[21] Even with Jeffery's inclusion of the artist as critique-able, there is still a partial separation of the artist from the work. How do we decide what is relevant?

Berleant is not concerned with the artist as a person. He describes what he calls, "'a morality of creativity,' one that demands honesty of artists more than truths, that condemns them for acquiescing in formulas and other facile solutions, and that denies them respect when they repeat themselves," and re-

quires them to discover new depths of understanding.[22] It sounds like a beautiful sentiment and is a good start for judging whether an artwork is 'good'. Though it does require honesty, it makes no further moral or ethical claim on the artist.

What About the Intentions of the Artist?

Specifically, intention refers to "the plan or design [the artist] has in mind when composing his [or her] work."[23] The artist's plan may be essential when assessing the skills employed by the artist. For example, in determining Audrey Flack's abilities, it would be appropriate to judge whether her treatment of colour supported her photorealist aims? Moreover, historically, it is possible to imagine many examples from impressionism, to cubism, to jazz, to rock and roll, and so on, where art was disregarded because it was not understood? Yet, determining the design behind a work can be difficult. Is the artist sincere? Does the artist always know the 'best' meaning of his/her work? What happens in the circumstance that an artist's opinion of his/her own work changes? What if an artist denounces an earlier work as completely unsuccessful but the public does not?

I. C. Hungerland explains that there are three methods regularly employed to determine the artist's intention; "(a) asking him [or her], (b) examining the context, social and historical of his making and performance and (c) inspecting the product or performance."[24] She notes that (a) is not always reliable and may rely on delving into the psychology (both conscious and unconscious) of the artist. With (c), she points out that any interpretation will be influenced partly by the background and biases of each individual audience member and partly by the content of the work itself.[25] As a result, both methods are unreliable.

Moving away from these concerns, I. C. Hungerland argues that, "the standard you seek is found in the work"[26] and not in the artist's intentions. Moreover, if the artist is successful, the intention should be apparent in the work. There is validity to the position that an artwork should be able to stand on its own proverbial feet. But, if the intention of the artist does not need to be known to evaluate the work, then is the artist important? Naturally, like most things, it is hard to effectively argue for either extreme, that the intention is of no importance or that it is of sole importance. I. C. Hungerland offers that, "The author is, then, neither the authoritative reader for all of us under all circumstances, nor a reader on par with others. He should be neither set up as a standard, nor loftily dismissed as a piece of biographical irrelevance."[27]

Whenever we compartmentalize the art from the artist, judge them independently (even in part), then we are also affirming that the art does not belong (at least solely) to the artist. In short, disregarding the intention disregards the artist. This can seem like an easy fix to the moral dilemmas of problematic artists. We can enjoy good art and avoid 'sticky' individuals. But this reasoning has its limits. bell hooks advocates for increased inclusion and support for artists from marginalized groups.[28] Though a richer diversity in stories and points of view is important, hooks is also concerned with, "the importance of art in making culture"[29] as well as, "the primacy of art… where we can find the deepest, most intimate understanding of what it means to be free."[30] This freedom refers to the freedom of expression available to the artist and the freedom one may interpret and experience from art. If we disregard the importance of the artist to the work, are we also dismissing issues of institutionalized and social inequalities?

What About Issues of Ethics and Morality Regarding Art?

There was a time that piety, virtue and religious moral purpose were considered a necessary part of the credo of an artist.[31] But now, with art separated from artist, this is no longer the universal standard. Philosophizing on what is moral versus what is amoral is beyond the scope of this inquiry. For practicality, we can accept the liberal Western (Judeo-Christian) ideas of right and wrong as a general basis for the position of this paper.

The ethics of art can be assessed by two separate but related categories:

1. "the moral status of the art objects, objects challenged for their formative influence on those who are exposed to them," and
2. "the moral stature of the artist."[32]

Berleant describes three types of moral demands that can be placed on the artist; moral responsibilities as a human, the standard of the artistic profession, and the influence on the audience.[33] These categories are not particularly distinct. The respon-

sibilities overlap and one would hope that the first standard would be enough. However, as artists may have a more persuasive influence on the public, they should be held to a higher standard. But there is debate whether this morality applies to the individual as a person, or, as Jeffery suggested with intention, that only artistically relevant personal elements of the artist be considered. Do we collectively make a moral compromise and weigh the benefits of the art against the failings of the individual artist?

This issue seems less complicated if we imagine an example outside of the realm of art because the value of art is still disputed in our society. In the hypothetical circumstance of a scientist who discovers a cure for a disease, the value of his work is much less ambiguous. In this hypothetical case, we discover that this scientist has used his position to coerce women who work for him to have sex with him. In fact, he has raped them. Do we collectively reject his contributions to science, or do we turn a blind eye so that he may continue his work uninterrupted? Historically, we often lean towards the second option while we try to quietly limit the number of women over whom he has authority. On occasions, the perpetrators have been convicted and served a prison sentence. If he is sentenced to prison, do we accept that we will not be able to benefit from potential further scientific advancements while he is incarcerated? Do we offer him special privileges in prison that other inmates would never have available to them? Do we accept that his access to affluence would likely protect him from being convicted in the first place? There are numerous moral ambiguities. And with art, of which the benefits are not so universally accepted, these issues are even more difficult to morally navigate. Additionally, this analysis is reliant on a point of view of the individual genius. It does not question all that would have been in place to support the individual's success nor does this example challenge the current structures of our society.

I read some of the accounts of the women who were raped and sexually assaulted by Bill Cosby. I should use the word "allegedly," but I won't. I read about the horror that he inflicted and felt entitled to inflict. I am a stand-up comedy fan and Cosby has comic talent. He's a great storyteller. His hosting the TV show, *Kids Say the Darndest Things*, was a personal favourite. I feel so disgusted at the trauma he caused. When discussing Cosby, it is imperative to, at least, acknowledge the racial complications of the public decimation of a prominent black man.

Then again, Angelo Longoni describes Caravaggio as "someone full of great potential who somehow gets trapped under the weight of this potential and gets destroyed by it."[34] This apologetic and romantic stance could be accurate. It could also be argued that power corrupts. Thus, anyone who achieves a certain amount of public recognition will inevitably disappoint. Still, both these arguments release the artist from some, if not all, of the responsibility for their behaviour. Should they be destined to self-destruct or susceptible to corruption? The belief that excellence comes at amoral cost relieves everyone of responsibility.

Anne Bernays writing about Derek Walcott, a Nobel Prize winner in Literature and a known harasser of young women, states, "His poetry is one thing, his life is something else."[35] I think she perfectly sums up the general societal attitude. We are continually willing to compromise ourselves by compartmentalizing the good work from the problematic individual. Unfortunately, this often means that those who have something we want are treated differently than the average person.

Bernays argues that it is false to assume that the work reflects the artist. She uses Sally Mann's controversial images of her often-naked children. She states, "the pictures' very power works against them by implying a moral connection between the models and their parent. This connection is as false as it is seductive."[36] How does she know how false it is? To find out, we can interview the mother and children and make an assessment. But to truly know otherwise seems unlikely. Bernays points out that her own fiction writing often leaves her audience making false assumptions about her life experience and character. This would be true because we use our imagination in our art. But isn't it also true that we embed some of ourselves in our work? How do you do anything without 'yourself'? Is our way of thinking and seeing not embedded into our works?

Vittorio Storaro, when describing Caravaggio's approach said, "any person, particularly when's he's creative, when he's a visionary, tries to transfer in his own work who he is."[37] So, when I laugh at a joke by Cosby am I laughing with him as he gets pleasure

from drugging a woman and raping her? Or, when I look at one of Caravaggio's painting and admire his skills do I admire his violence?

Reading about Roman Polanski, Cosby and Caravaggio, I ask myself again, 'why spend time learning about these sickening men'? Yet, what they did and who they are matters. If I do nothing and ignore the personal, that in itself is a choice and an action. While deliberating, it is reasonable to start from a neutral position. However, at a certain point neutrality is a choice and no longer a defendable stance.

How do we deal with the legacies of these artist? Joan Tarshis, a survivor of Cosby's violence, believes that his legacy will be similar to that of O. J. Simpson, "you don't think, Oh great football player. That doesn't come to mind first. I'm thinking it's not going to be, Oh, great comedian. It's going to be, Oh, serial rapist."[38] As Longoni points out, "a Caravaggio exhibition...held a century ago…the greatest interest would have been focused on the man's impetuous character, on his misdeeds..."[39] I do hope Cosby is remembered as a serial rapist, but I'm not certain this will be the case. His behaviour was known in the industry for years but was conveniently ignored and covered up.

What else do we lose when we make this moral compromise? We lose good artists that are also inspiring people. Like Daryl Davis, a Black American musician, who has met and befriended white supremacists from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). His friendships with three prominent KKK leaders contributed to the dismantling of the Maryland chapter. What about Frida Kahlo's personal vulnerability? What about Beth Stelling and Margaret Cho, two comedians who are currently working on jokes that address their personal experiences of being raped? Are their works not informed (and elevated) by who they are? Must I appreciate their art separate from their characters?

There is no clear line, however thin, between the artist and the art. We don't need to outright boycott significant works because of problematic figures. Instead, it becomes our responsibility to acknowledge the artist when we praise the art. And we ought to always move forward towards structures that address current imbalances and inequalities. In addition, until this is implemented the implications of dismissing (even partially) the artist when critiquing the work are that: the artist is not apparent in the work; the artist is not important to the understanding, appreciation and criticism of the work; by not addressing or acknowledging the issues, we condone/forgive/excuse the actions; and that the art is independent of the artist, and thus does not belong solely to the creator.

From Beit Sahour to Austria to Jordan—exploring the known to explore the unknown.

by Tara Hakim

Mornings at my grandparents' house are always the same, whether I am there or not. My grandfather is an early riser. He gets out of bed, takes off his sleep apnea mask—an addition he has grown accustomed to over the last 16 years, prior to which my grandmother wore ear plugs to bed, so you can imagine how loud his snoring is—slips his feet into his comfy house shoes, puts on his robe and

heads straight to the kitchen for breakfast. Before he does anything, he needs to eat. My mother must have inherited this from him.

In the meantime, my grandma would be lying awake in bed. Unlike her other half, she likes to stay in bed for a few minutes before she gets up to slip her feet into her comfy house shoes, put on her robe and head to the kitchen. By then, my grandfather would be squeezing fresh oranges for the both of them. They drink their juice, and make some coffee to take out for their daily walk around the garden. As my grandmother walks around, admiring her flowers and picking off the dried leaves, my grandfather is picking fruit. In the summer, you'll find him up in a fig tree, in the spring, he'll be picking plums and sometimes tiny strawberries. After eating some of his harvest, he goes to get ready for work, as he has since 1967, 6 days a week.

While my grandma does not work, she has her individual daily routine too. If the weather permits, after coffee comes swimming. She did the same in their last house, where they had lived for 32 years. Even her swimming has a routine. You will find a chair by the pool, with her towel hung on it, and on the floor beside the chair, a clock. Once she gets in, the cycle begins. She swims around the edges of the pool, using the breaststroke, keeping her head above water, with her hair up and a sunhat on. On the way, if she spots any dried leaves or flowers stuck on the rims of the pool's overflow, she will stop and take them out. 40 minutes goes by as she swims round and round, completely content.

Then, when the clock indicates 40 minutes have passed, she does some water exercises. Her back is to the pool's wall, her arms in a t-shape along the edge of the pool, she lifts one leg up to hip level and back down, and then alternates sides. A few more minutes after which she gets out, takes a shower and then prepares her breakfast (her favourite meal of the day). For the longest time, her breakfast consisted of a big bowl of muesli with fruit, honey and yogurt, a breakfast option she handed down to us from her Austrian background. After too many years of the same breakfast, she now moves between two options: two slices of German bread with butter and my grandfather's homemade jams, or Arabic bread, hot green peppers, tomatoes, Labneh (a thick strained yogurt popular to the Middle East) and olive oil pressed from their garden. She enjoys her breakfast while watching the news, or reading on her iPad. She also checks the weather of every city where a loved one lives.

Mornings at my grandparents' house are always the same, whether I am there or not. Unlike my grandfather, I am not an early riser. By the time I wake up, from what repeatedly proves to be the best night of sleep, my grandfather would have eaten, squeezed orange juice, made coffee, climbed a tree, taken a shower, gotten dressed and would be on his way out to work, or already gone. As I make my way downstairs, I'll either find my grandmother mid-swim or reading in the kitchen. She'll always wait for me to have breakfast. I'll find a glass of fresh orange juice, with a couple of fresh figs or strawberries on a plate, washed and waiting for me. We make some coffee, and head out to the garden.

It's my turn to take in all the beauty and nature around me. It is the only place I feel completely at peace, at home. Even more than when I am at my parents' house, where I lived for most of my life. It is my place of escape, refuge, peace, creativity and love. The house is beautiful, but it's not just that; it's them, my grandparents: the life their house is filled with, the warmth, the care and unconditional love. It was the same at their old house; I was much younger and so I didn't quite understand what it all meant, but it was still a place I loved to visit, a place of love, caring and belonging. As I grew older, I began to realise how much they meant to me, how much they gave me and how natural it was for me to go to them in times when I am need of comfort. This was especially true during the last six years or so.

This is not about me, however, it is about them. The more time I spent with them, the more I wanted to know about them. I only knew them as my grandparents, I only knew what I experienced with them, I only knew them in the years since I was born, during which time I was too little to grasp or remember what was

Wedding Portrait, 1963

happening. I knew so little of their past, and so, I began to ask questions. And the more I found out, the more I wanted to know. I had always regarded them as just my grandparents, nothing more. But, when I started to look at their past, at them individually, and as a couple in the early years, I realised how much they had gone through, and I began to see a story. A story, I think, is an attestation to the most elemental and powerful of human emotions and experience, a depiction of love in its purest forms: "just like a great mountain, made of billions of specks of tiny dust. It can never collapse or be destroyed, and stays always as it is."[1] A story about human life, in all its beauty, suffering and mystery: a story of 57 years. A story I have begun to seek, listen to, understand and inquire about. A story that is still in fragments, a puzzle with missing pieces, yet to be discovered.

My wish to document them has evolved into a need, an inner calling —a persistent one too— that I have been determined to explore, comprehend, and hopefully carry through. I wonder then, why? Why do I feel so compelled to know and tell their story? Is it the fear of losing something so precious? Or is there something more? I want to know who my grandparents are, not as I know them, but as Gerlinde and Tawfiq.

Gerlinde. Lindi. Teta Linda. A daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a friend, a woman. Gerlinde was born on March 1st, 1942 in Vienna, Austria. She is the eldest of three daughters. They had had a brother too, somewhere in between, but unfortunately, he passed away at the age of three or four—another missing puzzle piece. During the Second World War, Gerlinde and her family moved to the countryside, somewhere in Austria— another question to ask. Her father was in the army, and at that time, it meant he was in the Waffen-SS, the armed section of the Nazi Party's Schutzstaffel or the SS. After the war, the Waffen-SS was condemned as a criminal organisation and its veterans were denied many rights. Her father was then unable to obtain a job, and even though her mother worked, they endured some tough times, living on little money and food. That's all I know as this was a hidden, shameful fact only revealed to me a few years ago. At the age of 12, after six years, they all moved to Vienna, where Gerlinde continued school and went on to study Window Display Design, a field of study I had not known even existed, let alone in those days. Even if she only worked briefly in this particular field, and did not have a career in the creative world, she definitely found an outlet for her creativity, or rather, many outlets. The cards she writes are one example. Her handwriting is beautiful, surprisingly straight, with a design quality to it. She adds her own sketches too, drawing vines and flowers or hearts. On the envelope, she writes the name of the recipient on the front. Sometimes, she adds a little ribbon where she slides a few flowers from her garden. Her table settings are another example. Seeing her Christmas Eve dinner table all set up is a new experience every year. It's always beautiful: handwritten name tags, candles all around, small silver stars scattered like snow on the table, and always something from the garden. Gerlinde is creative. Her creativity is in her nature; it stems from love and she creates with love. Her ability to love many people, continuously, unconditionally and fully, still fascinates me.

Tawfiq. Georg. Goerge. Abu Marwan. Opi. A son, a brother, a husband, a father, a grandfather, a friend, a man. Tawfiq was born on January 15th, 1939, in Beit Sahour, a Palestinian town east of Bethlehem, where he lived throughout his childhood. He has two sisters and two brothers, and he falls right in the middle. As I'm writing this, I realise that I don't have any idea as to what his parents did, or even what his childhood was like. How did they earn a living? What was his childhood home like? His neighbourhood? His school? What was Beit Sahour like? What is it like now?

I have yet to set foot into Palestine. The timing was never right although the feeling has always been there, for many reasons. My father's mother and father also come from Palestine. I feel an unexplainable connection to it; a curiosity, a love and longing. The timing was never right, but somehow, now, I feel the right time is approaching. This is not about me however, it is about Tawfiq. I do know a little of his childhood. As a teenager my grandfather was a rebel; he was involved in politics, and according to him, was usually the leader of protests or rallies. He was a rebel at school too, but because his grades were unexpectedly high, teachers put up with him. Thinking about this, I am not surprised. Tawfiq is highly opinionated. He is stubborn, extremely knowledgable and has a lot of charisma. He observes and thinks. He is a man of few words, unless he is prompted to tell a story—something I do a lot. He is a great sto-

ryteller, especially when telling of his past, his experience in life. I do not want to try to write about his storytelling, I feel it can only be understood if seen or experienced—something I will make sure to document. His stubbornness however, I can write about.

There is the story of the olive jar. Apart from making jams, Tawfiq pickles olives from the garden. One night, he filled a large glass jar, that holds 3 litres, with olives, ready to be stored to pickle. In the morning, he wanted to move it to another room where they stored these many jars. My grandmother insisted he didn't, it was extremely heavy and she was afraid he would slip or it would fall. It wasn't crucial that he moved it at that moment, she had told him their helper could do it, he was much younger and stronger. But Tawfiq's stubbornness kicked in, and he didn't listen. He carried the jar and walked out of the kitchen. A few moments later, a boom. He had fallen. His fall had woken my aunt sleeping upstairs. She ran out to see what had happened; later she described that what she saw was like a painting. As she looked down, she saw my grandfather sitting on the floor in his pyjamas; olives, olive oil and glass all around him. He had a deep cut in his hand and blood was dripping everywhere. They tried to persuade him to let them take him to the hospital. He wouldn't listen. Remembering old rituals from Beit Sahour, he put ground coffee all over his wound, and said it would stop the bleeding. Eventually, he agreed to go to the hospital, but he wouldn't let them take him. With his bleeding coffee-covered hand, he drove to the hospital where the doctors were astounded by the coffee. They had never heard of that technique, and it only made things more difficult to clean. He got stitches and then drove to work as if nothing had happened. That morning at my grandparents' house was an anomaly.

At the age of 20, in 1959, Tawfiq travelled to Vienna to study medicine, a decision largely decided for him by his father. He lasted two semesters—another missing puzzle piece—during which he met Gerlinde at a dancing party. He was 20 and she was 17. He asked her to dance. He told her his name was Goerge and that his mother was English. Eventually, he told her it was his grandmother that was English and not his mother. Soon after, not one member of his family was English —which is the truth. He was Tawfiq again, although my grandmother still calls him Georg. At some point, his father heard that his son in Austria had gotten engaged. In Beit Sahour, it was customary to marry from the same village, even the same family, and now their son was with an Austrian woman. Marrying a foreigner was not approved of; there had been bad experiences between foreigners marrying Palestinians in the village. So he flew all the way out and tried to bring his son back home. Tawfiq refused, and declared his love for Gerlinde. In return, his dad stopped sending Tawfiq money but that did nothing. Their love prevailed. Even when Tawfiq moved to Germany to work and study, Gerlinde followed him, and worked there. They lived in separate houses, with families, as at that time they could not live together before being married. Many details are missing, but it's the stories that I do know that are driving me to dig deeper, to venture on this journey.

On the 27th of April, 1963, they got married in Vienna with the support of her family, except her father, who disapproved of their relationship; he did not want his daughter marrying an Arab man. As for Tawfiq's family; no one was there, they did not even know of his marriage. On October 5th of the same year, my mother Mariam, their first child was born in Vienna. Tawfiq was not there for the birth, he remained in Germany to study and work. At this point, Tawfiq's father had a change of heart, he now had a granddaughter, and his financial support for his son restarted. As Tawfiq was studying, Gerlinde had to work. That meant that my mother was raised by her great grandmother in Vienna for the first 16 months of her life while Gerlinde worked in Germany designing shop windows. A couple of years later, on May the 5th in 1965, their second child, Nadia was born in Vienna. Again, my grandfather was not present for the birth. He was on a trip visiting the Middle East, related to his father's work. Gerlinde laughs about this now, but I imagine it must have been extremely difficult, even if she had her mother or sister present. Her other half, her husband, was not there for the birth of their children, even for the birth of their third child too, their only son, Marwan, who was born on the 27th April, 1971, in Amman, Jordan.

Back to Germany, for now. After the birth of their second child, it was decided that it was time for Gerlinde to fly to Beit Sahour to meet the entire family. By now, she had only met Tawfiq's younger brother, Tanas, who was also studying in Germany and his uncle, Nicola, who came for a visit. Both Nicola and Tanas would take Gerlinde back to Beit

Sahour to meet the family, stopping on the way in various places in Europe. Tawfiq could not join them. He had to finish his studies. When thinking about my young grandmother, travelling basically on her own, to meet the family of her husband on the other side of the world, all I can think is, what a strong woman she is. I can only imagine the culture shock, the difference, the fear…she spoke no Arabic, they spoke no German, with the exception of Tanas, who was understandably her best companion during the trip.

One story she did tell me has never left my mind. When they arrived in Beit Sahour, she was greeted with kisses, hugs, and Arabic words. As they drove to Tawfiq's family home, she sat between his mother Olga, and his grandmother, Mariam, as they coddled her and attempted to communicate. On a side note, I recently found out my mother was named Mariam, after her great-grandmother, in an attempt to reconcile the relationship with Tawfiq's family. Gerlinde stayed at her in-laws house and shared a bed with Tawfiq's sister in law, Fadwa, who kissed Gerlinde goodnight on her forehead every night—I would have loved to have been there. It always felt like something that came out of a movie; the foreign Austrian blonde girl with green eyes, meeting the loud, warm Palestinian in-laws. And sitting squeezed between the mother and grandmother in-law in a car seems like a perfect scene from a movie, it says a lot about both cultures and Gerlinde's situation in a humorous way; the experience, and possibly the culture shock. I'm not sure how long she stayed there, or exactly what happened—another aspect to explore— but it meant that she was finally part of the family.

By 1967, Tawfiq had finished his studies and was contemplating a doctorate. At the same time, back home in Palestine, things were looking bleak. Following the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, where the ongoing civil war between Arabs and Jews transformed into an inter-state conflict between Israel and the Arab states (specifically after the Israeli Declaration of Independence on the 15th of May 1948), relations between Israel and its neighbours never really normalised. And in June 1967, tensions became dangerously heightened.

A war broke out. Known as the Six-Day War, the June War, the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, or the Third Arab–Israeli War and to us, النكسة (Al-Naksah)- "The Setback". Beit Sahour was one of the many Palestinian territories that came under Israeli occupation. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced. The older members of Tawfiq's family remained. They could not imagine leaving, it was their home, their history, their country. The younger generations however, were encouraged to move, to diversify, to grasp any opportunities they could. Some moved to Cyprus and many to Jordan. Even though the hope for Palestine to return to its full glory was there, they knew it was unlikely. They were right—not to say any hope or fight is now lost.

After the six-day war, Tawfiq's father Goerge fled with the refugees to Amman, Jordan to check on his business there. What he thought was going to be a short visit turned into something very different. He could not return to Palestine. He was denied entry. Tawfiq's aspirations for a doctorate were shut down, and so was any future for his family in Palestine. He was to move back to Jordan, to work, to support his family's business. So, Tawfiq, Gerlinde, Mariam and Nadia packed their bags and drove from Vienna to Amman. I only know that it was a long and tough journey through many countries—an itinerary I must uncover. At some point, Tawfiq's father was finally able to obtain a permit that allowed him to return back to Beit Sahour. It was now up to Tawfiq to run and expand the business. And it was now up to Gerlinde to make a new life for herself and her children in a completely new culture, a completely new world.

Once they arrived in Jordan, they moved into Tawfiq's aunt's house for 1 hectic week before moving to his cousin Viola's house. Gerlinde made a friend in Viola, who was extremely welcoming and helpful. Viola was also a teacher at a school where my mother was enrolled, and eventually her younger siblings as well. They remained with Viola for just over two weeks after which they moved into an apartment of their own. Gerlinde met a friendly neighbour, Um-Khalid—which literally means 'the mother of Khalid'—who taught her a lot about Middle Eastern cooking and about living in Amman. It is worth noting that it is customary in the middle east to call people as the father or mother of their eldest son, hence why Tawfiq, my grandfather, is known as Abu-Marwan meaning 'the father of Marwan.'

After one year as the neighbour of Um-Khalid, Gerlinde said her goodbyes and the family moved to another house in an area called Jabal Al-Hussein where they remained for two years. Tawfiq then found a house in a better neighbourhood, called

Shmeisani, with a garden for the kids to play. They lived there for seven years, during which time they became good friends with their landlords who later on became their neighbours for 32 years—in their next house—and almost daily morning visitors to Gerlinde and Tawfiq's pool—after, of course, Gerlinde had finished her 40 minute cycle. When I ask why my grandparents had moved so many times, all I get as an answer is "things were not easy back then."

Three days after moving into the house in which they lived for seven years, on September 16th 1970, a civil war broke out. It lasted until September 27th. In the Arab World, it is known as Black September. The two opponents were the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, and the Jordanian Armed Forces, under the leadership of King Hussein. For Tawfiq and Gerlinde, having a basement two floors under was a lifesaver, both emotionally and physically. It acted as their bomb shelter. It was their home for the length of the war. Gerlinde or Tawfiq went up every once in a while to grab supplies. The children, Mariam, Nadia and Marwan, remained underground, distracted, yet probably aware of what was going on around them—many details I have yet to uncover. It is fascinating to me, to discover and uncover, to understand and learn, to realise what and how much has happened in their lives. How one story leads to another, how little fragments come together, how little details reveal so much, how they have come to where they are now—two houses later.

Towards the end of those seven years, Tawfiq had bought an empty piece of land opposite their apartment and built a house, in which they lived for 32 years and in which many of my childhood memories took place. It was their first house with a pool, it sparked Gerlinde's daily 40 minute cycle that has yet to end—at her age, she defies all odds, her energy is that of a young woman. I remember every detail of their house—since they moved to the house they now live in, their son Marwan and his family renovated it and made it their own home. It's different now, but, it remains in our family. It was a cozy house, with two stories, a roof and a garden that hugs the house on all sides. The ground floor acted like more of a basement. It was where they hosted their parties in a dark room, with lots of wood, bar furniture and of course, the bar itself. It was where we kids snuck off to, full of curiosity. The first floor contained most of their family life, and later on, our visits. The bedrooms my mother and her siblings grew up in, became our playrooms and bedrooms when we were there (my older sister and I)—which happened quite often. The kitchen, which opened up to a small balcony area leading to the garden, hosted a lot of memories.

One of my most unforgettable memories is that of welcoming my grandfather back from work. Tawfiq always arrived between 5 and 6 in the afternoon, after we had all eaten lunch—a fact that still hasn't changed. He'd settle down in his chair, which was at the head of the table after heating up a plate of Gerlinde's cooking. I'd sit across from him, on the edge of the L-shaped kitchen booth, the length of the table separating us. I'd sit there and watch him eat. Every time, no matter how his day was—his job had been the main stress inducer throughout his life and the main cause of many family issues between him and his brothers—he'd look up to me and say, with a very particular rhythm, "Don't look at me so funny because I'm eating like a bunny." The funny thing is, my eating habits and tastes mainly developed from him.

I have always looked up to him. When I was younger, I followed him around, and learnt from him. I watched him grill, I watched him smoke his cigar, a daily habit until this day—the smell of cigar, wherever I am, sparks a direct referral to him—and I ate with him. He enjoyed eating with me, as I am daring like him, and my taste buds match his. I believe, as strongly as Tawfiq believes, that "the closer to the bone the sweeter the meat". As I grew older, I realised his extensive book collection, his high level of general knowledge and his extensive life experience. I still look up to him, I still watch him grill, I still watch him smoke his cigar and I still learn from him. He is Opi, after all—German for granddad and what I now call him.

You would think that I would call Gerlinde Oma, German for grandma, but to me she is Teta Linda, Teta meaning grandma in Arabic and Linda being an easier version derived from Gerlinde that one of her grandchildren came up with at an early age; I think. Or it may have been created to make it easier for her new life in Amman—I must find out. This intermingling of cultures and languages is something I'm very used to. Even though we could each have had our own bedroom when we stayed at our grandparents' house, my older sister and I preferred to go

through the trouble of retrieving two mattresses from the basement to place at the edge of Teta and Opi's bed. Sometimes, we slept next to Teta, forcing Opi to sleep in one of the other bedrooms. Gerlinde sang us lullabies in German. After the first time, we'd ask her every time and sometimes we would not let her stop. She'd never say no.

One night, after Gerlinde had gone through the few songs she knew and we had asked for more, instead of repeating the same songs as she usually did, she came up with a new song. Gerlinde found a way to make that specific day's activities into a song. She sang to us what she did from the moment she woke up until the moment she was next to us, the moment she was singing to us. The lyrics were not beautiful, she does not have a beautiful voice—Tawfiq is the singer—but the fact that she did it for us, repeatedly, and with the same tenderness and love every time, is beautiful. From Gerlinde, I learnt unconditional love, I learnt about care, about kindness, about being strong, about perseverance, about motherhood, about womanhood, and about emotion. She is full of emotion. Her story telling is the perfect example. It is imbued with emotion, movement and even sound effects. As is the case with Tawfiq, I do not want to try to write about her storytelling, I feel it can only be understood if seen or experienced—something I will make sure to document.

In 2009, after many years of construction, and in an attempt to escape what had transformed from a residential area into a very commercial, and highly congested area, Tawfiq and Gerlinde moved into a beautiful house, large enough to accommodate many visitors—a continuous situation throughout their lives. The house is in a secluded area, a 30-minute drive from my family home, still untouched by the expanding city. It lies on a hill, overlooking their garden covered in green. The bottom part of the hill is reserved for countless lines of olive trees—that produce incomparable olive oil that we even pack with us for long trips—and grape vines that, every once in a while, disrupt the lines of olive trees. In between, you can find various things planted: figs, plums, garbanzo beans, sweet peppers, tomatoes, strawberries, herbs, almond trees…it all depends on the season.

The further uphill you go, the more beautiful it becomes. The farming land transforms into a garden. Here is where Gerlinde's flowers shine. If you follow the flowers, they will lead you upstairs where you will find yourself looking at the pool, tiled in dark blue, situated on a supported balcony between a wall of arches and the house. The house's natural earth coloured stone, and the dark pool, fit perfectly with the surroundings; scattered houses and hills of olive trees, which is precisely what Gerlinde sees, through the framing of the stone arches, as she swims round and round the pool for 40 minutes, completely content.

Recently, Gerlinde told me that the house they now live in is their last house. She said it in a way that expressed relief, peace and gratitude. I couldn't help but feel a sense of peace, knowing that all their years of moving and searching for home has ended. After trying to map out what little I know of their journey, and with a lot yet to be found, I realise that there is a lot more driving my urge to document their story. I am their biased granddaughter, I am trying to capture what I may lose, but I am also trying to capture what I think is an extremely telling story about human life and experience. I am trying to capture the many stories within their story. I am trying to capture a couple's journey through countries, cultures, wars, children, jobs, houses and pools.

Opi, Tara Hakim, 2016

Teta Linda, Tara Hakim, 2016

Along Gerrard Street East, Cince Johnston

Grammage

by Cince Johnston

The weight of disbelief had settled into a palpable silence – not unlike John Cage's famous 4'33" – every movement carried a significantly heightened tone. A cough, a smartphone shuddering, the shifting of feet, the rustling of a plastic shopping bag, , a hand reaching to pull the yellowed cord, the subsequent 'ding', all these normally muted sounds were audible in a pure stereo quality. Even the children were subdued. No words, only whisperings in the preoccupation of everyone's minds. Suddenly, a phone rings shrilly - a momentary relief. Promptly, and just as abruptly, it was silenced and all thoughts returned to their inward screens, replaying the southern drama that has irredeemably unfolded into their lives too. With each stop of the streetcar, a reflexive politeness prevailed, as people numbly moved toward the existence of their separate realities, feet shuffling to their morning's destination – groping for a memory of what life was like before this momentous milestone in history.

The American presidential election of 2016 felt eerily like my recollection of Ray Bradbury's 1953 dystopian novel "Fahrenheit 451". Bradbury paints a fantastical view of a futuristic society where houses had living rooms covered with wall-to-wall televisions, and where the TV personalities were referred to as "family". Cleverly, the television Voice would personalize the viewing experience, intermittently punctuating the banal discourse by inviting the tuned-in viewers to participate – off-handedly referring to them in person or allowing them to ask questions. Through this creation of a superficial sense of alliance and belonging, it made the attuned television watchers feel like they were part of the projected lives of "their Family". Essentially, life in THIS society revolved around the flickering screen.

I had read "Fahrenheit 451" before the invention of the Walkman. To me, the use of a tuned in listening "seashell" - the equivalent of airline earphones - that were worn every night to bed by the protagonist's wife, seemed truly farfetched. As I look around, I feel an uncanny likeness to this suggested faraway world of Bradbury's. Mobile technology has created a climate where we are all plugged in – all the time. Whether it be addiction, social engagement or gen-

uine interest in the stories relayed by the world's news agencies, the

overabundance of information does not necessarily aid us in making better judgements nor do we receive a broader view of events. Rather, we are guided by a clever internet which knows and records our habits, slyly catering to whatever our slant is.

I woke up this morning, post election, thinking that there is a greater divide in the United States than I thought. And, it dawned on me - I live in a decidedly post-secondary-educated middle-class bubble.

In Bradbury's faux world, books were forbidden. If they were discovered, they were subsequently burned. The title "Fahrenheit 451" is literally a reference to the temperature at which paper burns. Another author envisioning a futuristic society, Aldous Huxley, wrote

"Brave New World" in 1931. He satirically points out that books would be forgotten in the future due to the overwhelming dissemination of information and the innately human search for pleasure – not by external oppression as in Bradbury's world, but rather through

a loss of interest due to a fascination with entertainment.[1]

Huxley's view of a society bent on pleasure coincides with Neil Postman's "Amusing Ourselves to Death" – as both envision human energies distracted by the seduction of entertainment. If Postman's diatribe in 1986 on the attraction of television is a metaphor for all our current digital mediums, his concern which would also be timely today, lies in the potential of real news becoming too closely entangled with entertainment – that they would both eventually become frighteningly indiscernible from the other.

In the non-fiction climate of the latest American presidential elections, the public was privy to the unfiltered discourse of one candidate whose relationship with the camera has provided little separation of his actual from his TV persona: he had become, somehow, an appealing figure. The screen narrative is not going away. The marriage of entertainment and news is in full swing, and is irrevocably embedded in the language of our culture. Quoting Marshall McLuhan, Postman says "that the clearest way to see through a culture is to attend to its tools for conversation."[2]

In "Fahrenheit 451", the banishment of the book led to the formation of a renegade group whose members have chosen to each memorize entire books, keeping them alive in corporal virtuality. The death of an individual in this group is equated to the death of a writer's masterpiece – the literal embodiment of a book with a human cover. In our current society, will the abundance of media technology wipe out the existence of the printed book as an object?

Donald Rance, a librarian of the Art Gallery of Ontario, who openly declares he does not have a cell phone - although admits he occasionally borrows his wife's - does not fear the disappearance of the hard copy book. 'It is such brilliant technology. You don't need a battery. You can read it in the sun." He mentions how, in the bright summer sun, he frequently sees individuals peer into their screens as they move into the shadows to view what is displayed on their digital devices.

Indeed, our relationship with the Codex spans many centuries and runs deep. The historical book burnings were greeted with the metaphoric pain equivalent of a death; the death of someone's life's work, the death of the sacred idea, the death of analysis, the death of a culture. In "Fahrenheit 451", a woman's passionate reaction to the burning of her book collection and her insistence on dying with them, leaves the main protagonist, Guy Montag, curious about the contents of these books. He has secretly taken one and hidden it close to his chest under his jacket to understand what is so special?

The "Codex" is the Latin word for a block of wood. Its form as a book with separate pages bound together, encased within a cover was developed by the Romans in the early fifth century - a result of Christian scholars finding the need to differentiate their theological writings from Jewish scholarly works. The Codex likely spread throughout Europe due to its practical advantage of its format and with the spread of Christianity, eventually becoming the modern printed book with the invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1440.[3]

Figures from the Association of American Publishers indicate that e-book sales within the share of total books purchased are down as of April 2016. The company which did the survey, the Codex Group,

believe this number is related to the fact digital devices have not "delivered the quality long-form reading experience needed to supplant print, even with e-books' major price and convenience advantages." The other factor that they cite has been identified as "digital fatigue" which appears to confirm that the e-reader ownership has actually been in a slow decline for the past three years.[4]

The weekend after the election, I find myself on Queen Street East at the "Remarkable Bean" Coffee shop. I am the first one here, and for a brief moment, I enjoy the silence of the place before the barista notices that the music is not on. I have positioned myself in the farthest corner in a comfortable grey leather chair literally against the gutter of two walls meeting – one of yellow brick and the other a terracotta-painted gyprock. The languid pace of Saturday morning is a relief to the harried freneticism of a weekday. One father comes in with his daughter still in her footed pyjamas, he orders coffees while she explores. The weekend newspapers lie in disarray on a long Last-Supper styled table. The newspapers have been partitioned according to patron's interests. Simple pleasantries are made over coffee or the accommodating shifting of chairs and tables, morphing the original seating design to suit groups or those in need of an outlet to load up lagging digital devices. More of the newspapers are divided and exchanged. People fall in and out of discussions. Invariably, all conversations lead to south of the border. Everyone has an opinion. Everyone has a theory.

Our shift as a society to reading on a screen versus the somatic experience of exploring ideas via the physical act of turning a page has changed our relationship with the written word. However, the physical qualities of the book, newspaper or a magazine still involve interactive tactile experience. Admittedly, there is something about the hardcopy weekend paper that gives it a ritualistic quality. Maybe it's the question of more time available. Or, maybe it's version of a slower news, in this slower time, where issues have been explored in more depth.

To read from a hardcopy book also carries the reader into the realm of the olfactory. Although not sold as a highlighted fragrance in perfume departments, www.bondtoo.com sells a limited edition candle called "Scent of the New York Times" which smells like ink for those who do read the news digitally and miss their hard copy newspaper. I looked up the ingredients of ink and unto themselves none seem particularly palatable to the nose.* In this case, it is clearly the association of an odour as opposed to its actual airborne properties that resonate – an intermingling of scent, memory and nostalgia.

When I searched for information related to memory and the digital world versus the hard copy paper one I was greeted by studies done for Marketers or Advertising companies – actually, one was called a neuroscience marketing site. The main contributing writer, Roger Dooley, is the author of "Brainfluence: 100 ways to Persuade and Convince Consumers with Neuromarketing".[5]

A 2009 study undertaken by Bangor University and branding agency Milward Brown showed that physical materials "are more real to the brain. They have a meaning and a place...(are) better connected to memory because it engages with its spatial memory networks." In terms of reading comprehension and recall, a study in Norway demonstrated that, "students who read texts in print scored significantly better on the reading comprehension test than students who read the texts digitally".[6]

Upon mentioning a coverless bundle of papers comprising of a book, Rance tells me that in France during the 19th century, it was common practice to purchase a book as a collection of pages without a cover. Then, one would go elsewhere to have the pages bound and covered according to personal preference and financial possibilities. Rance politely excuses himself, disappearing into the labyrinth of the library, returning with a simple looking book clothed in a greyish white framing a bold green rectangle on the front - "The System of Landor's Cottage" by R. Graham. He opens it, showing that the pages are virtually seamed together at the top and one needs a special tool similar to an envelope opener to slide across this section on every second combination of pages – it appears that divisions of pages were printed up on a single sheet and then folded. He points out how this physical interaction would slow down the reading process, making it more intimate. I concurred, enjoying the idea of a personalized cover skillfully made, although, the thought of taking a knife to a book somehow felt sacrilegious.

Our discussion returns to the exterior design of books. He mentions the joy of holding a book with a good cover design. Again he disappears, bringing

back two of

Peter Mendelsund's books: a small black one titled "What We See When We Read" and a larger book called "Cover". Exploring Mendelsund's background, I am lead to the site www.bookcoverarchive.com - a large and varied selection of gorgeous book designs accompanied by the portfolios of the designers. I read a review related to this first book of Mendelsund's brought to my attention by Rance. It discusses Mendulsund's description of the working imagination that runs alongside reading. He warns the reader to think carefully about going to the movie version of a novel.

In the lifetime of a book as an object, it can have several owners, many readers, and infinite fingerprints. Separate from its internal story, the journey of a book is rarely known by the next reader. Some people are particular about their books – not willing to loan them for fear of damage or loss. Others may enjoy an extended imagination, creating the personality of the last library reader or former owner of a second hand book. To my surprise, Jennifer Woods, an avid reader since childhood and member of a monthly book club, said she was hesitant to read books from second hand sources since the "The Globe and Mail" ran an article in 2011 citing the discovery of bed bugs in some of the books in a Vancouver library.

Instead of darkly touching upon every librarian's nightmare or somehow prophesizing Bradbury's dystopian world (in the event of a fire which book would you grab?), I ask Rance if he had a favourite book from the libraries collection he would put in a time capsule? I see him pondering the question and quickly realize the weight of it as he searches for a response.

The notion of leaving items behind in a time capsule invites me to mentally wander and trace my relationship with the present. What would I carefully collect and place in a container for future generations to unearth? Is there something that symbolically represents my life – or rather, chronicles what is markedly indicative of my generation? And how would the content on digital media translate? Would the uncertainty of the digital medium on the fast changing track of technology make future access to information on the modern devices difficult? At least music can be written on sheets of paper. I wonder, is there somebody somewhere considering transcribing a television episode of "The Apprentice" or an edition of Fox News interviewing Donald Trump and Geraldo Rivera about their relationship dynamics on the aforementioned game show?

At the end of our conversation, Rance laments apologetically for his inability to spontaneously cite some of his favourite books in the AGO collection. I do not see this as a negative, but rather, a bibliophile's respect of the sacred life possessed by each book. He tells me in a moment of serendipity that the AGO has an exhibit running titled "Time Capsule". He explains that it consists of catalogues from all the prior exhibits held at the AGO – the graphic design of each indicative of their respective eras.

I remember that Andy Warhol left behind 610 time capsules, filled and filed between 1974 and his sudden death in 1987. As part of the Warhol Museum in Pittsburg, they are regularly opened and the contents of letters, photographs, newspapers and magazines, image ideas for artwork, books, exhibition catalogues, telephone messages, dinner invitations, unopened letters, along with some less palatable items like toenail clippings and used condoms, all are displayed for public viewing (www.warhol.org/collection/archives). What Warhol mostly chose reminds me of Rance's comment on the seeming timeless technology of the book form and its extended printed family.

Time capsules aside, are people printing up their daily email discourses, their tweets, or for the hard copy visual, some of their thousands of family photos? What will be left for future generations to understand of their ancestors? Will the daily virtual diaries of our lives be accessible later? In existential cynicism, I ask, "does it really matter?"

The environmental responsibility for a paperless society reminds me of choice and balance. Could e-readers take the high road and argue that printed writers and hardcopy book readers should plant more? According to http://www.greenenergysavingtips.com/paperrecycling-facts/ in 2012, the average American will use 465 trees in their lifetime – 7 per year. In an article titled "I Am a Lumberjack", I was able to find a Canadian statistic in the Economist of the same year – Canadians consume 4.89 trees per year versus the American 5.57.[7]

Back on the streetcar, exactly a week after the elec-

tion, I watch a young woman scroll up and down on her iPad, I am reminded of the precursor to the Codex, the double-sided sheepskin scroll which in turn was preceded by the papyrus scroll. Save for one woman whose arms are laden with a full load of laundry in a plastic basket and a young man porting large white earphones staring into a musical space that is silent to the rest of us, all heads are bent, eyes tuned to some form of reading, or gaming? The man next to me is going back and forth between his cell phone and his e-reader. On the left side, there is passenger in her mid-fifties perched on a single seat, her tabloid-styled paper slightly spilling over the understood space allotted to her – a larger paper would have severely breached this. I peer to see what she is reading, the headline boldly states "One Hundred Ways to Live to 100". Nothing is immortal, but one likes to think of the printed word as such. In a moment of sudden darkness that normally only strikes me in the middle of the night, my thoughts shift to Postman's worrisome predictions; "our politics, religion, news, athletics, education, and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even popular notice. The result is that we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death." (8)

*ingredients of ink: pigment, pH modifiers, homectants to retard premature drying, polymeric resins to impart binding and allied properties, defoamer/ antfoaming agents such as surfactants to control surface propertiea, biocides to inhibit the fungal and bacterial growth that lead to fouling, and thickeners or rheology modifiers to control ink application!

"Le Corbusier, Le Couvent Sainte Marie De La Tourette, Eveux-sur-l'Arbresle, France 1960."

On Devotion: A Pastoral Road Trip Through the Countryside of France

by Kate Latimer

Acidadebranca. *"A CIDADE BRANCA." A CIDADE BRANCA*

Banality and the Surreal

It's silent on the drive up; through the hillside of Lyon, in a tiny rental car with a temperamental clutch, arriving at the concrete monastery where there once lived a hundred silent monks. At a sacred place built into the hillside of Éveux, we met the other five tourists who had also made the pilgrimage up to this towering site, considerately ignoring each other as we got out of our cars and took in for the first time the Convent de la Tourette. It was late into our second week of travelling together on the (as it turned out) last family trip we took as just the three of us. I'm fourteen or fifteen. We had spent the first week in Paris, before getting on a train to Burgundy where we rented a car and moved into a medieval cottage beside a stream, complete with a toilet under the stairs and backyard access that involved a walk down a path to adjacent lots of vineyards, one of which was ours for the week. I remember lying on the hill amongst the vines, my parents a little ways away, sitting out at a wooden table finishing some wine (with prices that delighted my father, "these same bottles are three times the price at home"), while I read my way through my vacation reading list. I remember on that trip reading all the time: as we ate breakfast, in the car, waiting at gas stations and rest stops. Strangely furious reading, and I had inadvertently set myself the goal of a book a day, usually meaning that I would stay up late into the night with my eyes so heavy that I had to keep blinking so they wouldn't close on me. Sleep. I remember the feeling of despair I felt one night as I lay awake in bed, trying so hard to fall asleep while the clock in the medieval town just kept chiming the hour; hour after hour, convinced that, in those lonely hours where it feels like the whole world is quiet, I might never sleep again. It's funny what sticks in your memories: homemade lentils, the white nightgown I bought, the aggressive tiredness of jetlag that refuses to let go of you.

Driving from Burgandy to Éveux took a couple of hours, which I'm sure I spent reading and sleeping. The child of an architect, I was used to making the trek to see a building. While most kids spent their childhood trips wandering aimlessly through museum corridors, I was accustomed to a preliminary perimeter walk, before we even stepped inside, while we took in the design features of libraries and government buildings and public parks. Driving up that day, the countryside was scenic. We saw trees swaying in the wind and the universal view of the patchwork quilt of farms below us getting smaller and more rectangular. We drove further up the hillside, like the thousands of architecture students before us, to see for ourselves, that monastery built into the side of a hill.

Going through my memories, I can't seem to remember my fist impression of the building. It must have been surprising, this concrete tower rising out of the Earth, so obtrusive in this landscape, and yet soothing in its monastic brutality. In those days I hadn't heard of Le Corbusier, and words like "modernism" weren't yet in my vocabulary. An active monastery, we had to wait for a guided tour in order to set foot inside. We headed out on our traditional perimeter check, walking around so that I could see for the first time the building against the backdrop of the French countryside. Staggeringly beautiful—it's hard to describe the feeling as you take in this giant, ferocious building nestled gently into the landscape. So at odds with each other—the natural landscape and the manmade structure disrupting the patterns of the rolling hills—and yet it seems right, like a part of a dream that only seems strange once you wake up. Surreal, as if I hadn't yet awoken from my nap in the car on the ride up.

Spirituality

Religion, spirituality, faith: all words foreign to me, even when spoken in English, which they weren't, on the tour of La Tourette. The tourists had stood in a circle and voted that French was the only language we all had in common, and so our tour guide happily narrated our journey through the monastery. Still sleepy from the car ride, I was experiencing that transitional state where everything seemed a little hazy and yet monumentally irritating. Being a well-behaved young person, I was going through the inner turmoil of appearing to be happy and excited, while I felt irrational frustration building inside of me like a pressure cooker. I think we started upstairs, in a monk's room. My French, barely good enough to order food at lunch, forced me to concentrate on our tiny tour guide, taking in most of what she said and turning to my mother who whispered translations into my ear for the vocabulary we had yet to cover in grade nine French class. The room is six feet wide and seven feet tall— the perfectly proportioned room, according to the architect, so that no space is wasted. It is Le Corbusier's Modular—a proportioning system based on human measurements, the

double unit, the Fibonacci numbers, and the golden ratio.[1] Stepping inside the room it is sparse, a bed and a small washbasin. There are small balconies for the monks to step out on, but it is a room for sleep: a cell.

Commissioned by Marie-Alain Couturier, the Dominicans of Lyon asked Le Corbusier to design their priory.[2] Built with a hundred bedrooms and halls for study and recreation, it was designed for a hundred Dominican monks to pursue their serious study. The Dominican friars are a proselytizing sect, believing that true devotion comes out of self-denial and a simple way of life.[3] Known to have produced some great philosophers and thinkers, the monks focus on learning and devoted study. La Tourette was a place where the friars could come for a few years while they studied and worshipped. Once full, now the great monastery hosts no more than seven or eight monks at a time.

Having no beliefs myself, it seemed like an inevitable truth that the population of men, willing to devote themselves to the monastic tradition and move to the isolated pastoral landscape of La Tourette, would diminish. To me, the modern world seemed like an anesthetic against faith. Too much information, too much cruelty, too many centuries of organized religion ruling the lives of the common people through fear-mongering and blind hatred of the unknown. I couldn't separate faith from religion.

I had had brief moments in my life, before then, when I had a sense of some kind of spirituality lying dormant within me. Moments when life seemed to thrust itself upon me in all its glory with a sort of perfection that invites daydreams of divine intervention. I remember as a little girl, waking up in a cottage one morning in Prince Edward Island, to find that at some point during the night, hundreds of cows had made their way into the field around us. Where before we had a view of fields of red sand, now all we could see were cows, standing around swishing their tails. Oddly delighted, I ran outdoors followed by the daughters of the family we travel with (my surrogate sisters), to get a better look at the cows. We grabbed bikes and started pedaling across the lawn into the fields, the morning dew making the tall grass wet and slimy, fighting to find some traction. The other girls fell behind; I abandoned the bike and started to walk until I found myself alone in a field in the midst of cows.

Up close the cows were much bigger than they seemed when I was standing on the front porch. Distrusting my presence, they all shifted uneasily, matching each move I made towards them with a group hustle away from me. I got down on my knees so that my head was below theirs, and reached out to them. Most of them ignored me but a couple of brave ones stepped forward to sniff my hand, making sure I wasn't offering treats. Looking into their eyes I felt them looking back at me, just as curious, just as hesitant.

Later that day some farmers drove up with big trucks and piled the cows in and took them home. For the rest of the trip we looked for a cattle farm nearby, but we never saw one. It was as if they just appeared in our field one morning; as if it was us who had trespassed on their territory, and not the other way around.

Devotion

As we continued on through the monastery we found ourselves in some strange spaces: hallways lined with tall windows and red, green and yellow walls, rooms with giant ceilings and small square doorways carved out of the walls. In the dining room, we saw a friar sitting at a table, in—to my disappointment—jeans and a collared shirt (not the long white robes I had imagined). He was smiling politely at us; I caught myself searching for something in his face. The look of the divine, perhaps? Someone who has happily settled into his greater purpose? What did it look like—devotion—could you spot it on someone like a proudly-worn badge?

Hearing information in an unfamiliar language makes my memories seem murky, as if we had swum in a group through the convent, instead of our hushed lineup walking behind our guide. She told us the brutalist design reflects the monk's lifestyle: tiny cells to sleep in, huge spaces for thinking and study, natural light-filled hallways to transition from one space to the next. The cement walls are a harsh statement about the nature of devotion: to make one feel at ease was never the intention of the grand design plan. The denial of luxury, the diminishment of human desire, for *things* and for each other, all manifests through (what I now think of as) the clean lines and uncluttered "devotional aesthetic". It sets the challenge: to endure. Stark rooms are the thinking caves that leave only room for the essential.

Acidadebranca. "A CIDADE BRANCA." *A CIDADE BRANCA*.

In those windowed hallways I felt enclosed, like a rat in a maze, with an uncanny perception of my own scale within the hallway, within the monastery, amongst the unpopulated hills of Èveaux, in the countryside of Lyon. It is enough to fracture reality for a split second while a feeling of the otherworldly settles around you. Le Corbusier and his own devotional practices to his craft, his formulas and ratios all calculated around the human form, creates a space where the inhabitants feel harmony amongst the dissonance (or as my dad might say, "that's just good design").

Faith

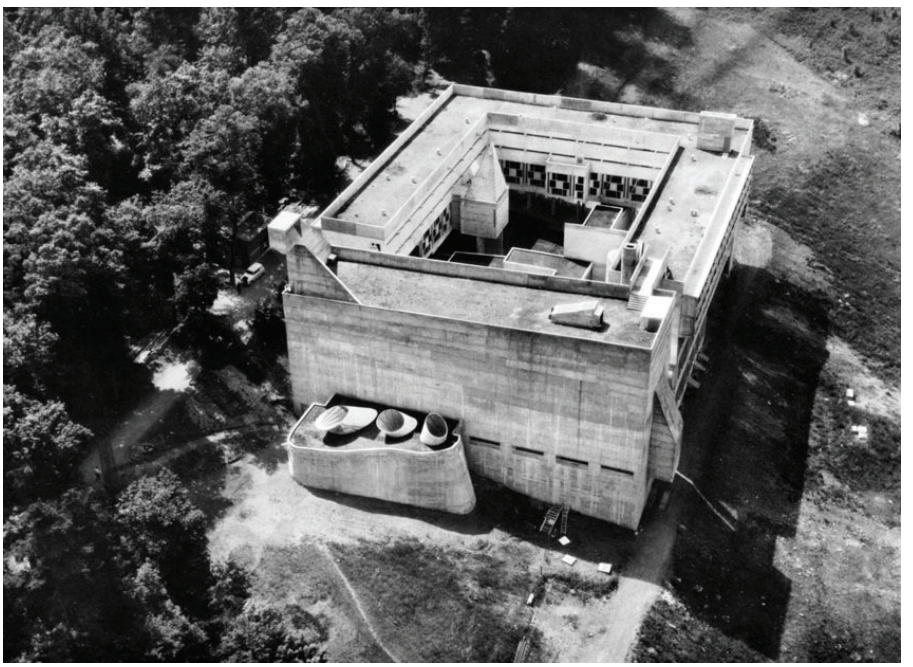
In a reoccurring dream I used to have as a child, I walked into a vast room, perfectly circular; the walls and ceiling covered in dark, glossy, mahogany. Dusty light filled the room with no visible source. In the middle was a tall ladder—two pronged so it could stand by itself—made of the same material covering the room. In the dream, I would look around for a moment and then wake up. Remembering the size of the room would knock the breath out of me, the heaviness of the air, the silence that felt like velvet amidst the silky wooden walls.

Walking into the church, a separate building entirely from the monastery, I felt it again, a feeling I couldn't at first place, but then came back to me as that fleeting moment after waking up from that dream as a little girl. The church was a rectangle, long and narrow, with high ceilings. Windowless concrete enclosed us. We stood as a group amongst the pews and took in the simple crucifix nailed to the far wall. I could feel the weight of the air, as if the prayers of the last 50 years had been whispered into existence.

Walking back out into the sunlight I remember being annoyed with the tourists who were asking questions about the amount of cement and cost of construction, etcetera. The mundane had no place here any longer. Hadn't we all just felt that, I wondered, as I looked around at my fellow group members, still looking for something different on their faces as if enlightenment left a mark?

Return

Getting back into the car, I think I was strangely noisy, talking about anything and everything as we pulled away from La Tourette. Down, we drove, along the little gravel path, back onto the paved road, our car getting smaller and smaller as it descended back onto the country roads of civilization.



Acidadebranca. "A CIDADE BRANCA." *A CIDADE BRANCA*

Sleeping with Elephants

by Julian Muia

PROLOGUE

Under the orange glow of a dim lamppost, Playfair Avenue looked like any other street in Toronto's North York section. Located a block south of Lawrence and Dufferin, the symmetrical row of bungalows, recycling bins, and family sedans, recalled a time when a small piece of suburbia was all the luxury one needed. It was the evening of Friday, January 29th, 2016, and a soft snowfall coated the driveway of 160 Playfair. To the naked eye, it was difficult to distinguish whether the red and blue reflections on the snow

were of Christmas lights, or the emergency vehicles surrounding the home.

Inside, an eighty-seven-year-old man lay dead in his kitchen, bleeding profusely from a single gunshot wound to the chest.[1] His neighbours, clad in pajamas and clutching their bathrobes, stood alongside yellow tape, watching as paramedics removed the body. Gossiping among themselves, they attempted to piece together a timeline of the night, treating the murder like less of a tragedy and more of a whodunit. They remembered the victim as a reclusive, elderly man who could occasionally be seen on afternoon strolls with his grandchildren, or planting tomatoes in his backyard. Unbeknownst to those present, a suspect was already in custody. The fifty-one-year-old son-in-law of the deceased quickly confessed to pulling the trigger during a heated argument, and the story began to take shape as a family squabble turned violent.[2]

The victim was Rocco Zito who, according to Revenue Canada, was a simple ceramic tile salesman.[3] However, to those within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ontario Provincial Police, and fourth estate, Zito was one of the key leaders of a powerful transatlantic secret society. To this dedicated group of law enforcement officials and journalists, the deceased senior was the most recent victim in a gangland war that saw bodies litter the streets of Quebec, Ontario, and as far away as Acapulco and Sicily. The single bullet that cracked the façade of Playfair's normality was the checkmate in a game between two families, cities, ethnicities, and societies. Nearly a year later, the exact cause of this unprecedented wave of violence is still unclear.

The only unanimous agreement on the subject pertains to what was at stake, which was territory. Since its amalgamation in 1998, the city of Toronto, Ontario, has been viewed by the Western world as an exemplary model of progressive ideals. Its population of 2.8 million is slightly larger than that of Chicago's, and yet, Toronto's reported crime rate is comparatively low.[4] However, beneath the neon lights, bicycle lanes, and storefront cafes, there lies another Toronto, one that is neither welcoming nor safe. In this seedy underbelly, a new age of depravity lives and breathes. Its heartbeat, similar to the rumble of passing subway trains, is heard but never seen, giving credence to the old adage, *out of sight, out of mind*.

It is in this Toronto that a round-the-clock supply and demand market can indulge any vice. Narcotics, weapons, and human sex trafficking, organ trade, child pornography, and contract killing; these are just some of the many goods and services that are readily available through cash transaction.[5] Today, Toronto's underworld is controlled by youth gangs, but for nearly four decades its dominant powers were the Sicilian Mafia and Calabrian 'Ndrangheta. To trace the origins of the conflict later known as the Second Montreal Mob War, one must first navigate the convoluted history of these two groups.

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau famously once said, "Living next to [the United States] is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant… one is affected by every twitch and grunt."[6] Canada certainly felt these reflexes in 1931, following the establishment of the American Mafia. Once warring street gangs, now reorganized into allied families, began looking to plant flags in the north; their aim was to control the flow of narcotics across the Saint Lawrence River and Burlington Bay. An early success story was Buffalo's Magaddino family, whose presence in Hamilton, Ontario, established the lucrative *French Connection* – a heroin highway linking Turkey to New York.[7] But for half a century, the most powerful Mafia syndicate in the country was the Rizzuto crime family of Montreal. Their rise from impoverished Venezuelan chicken farmers to the first family of Canadian crime is a story of betrayal and bloodshed.

I

Arriving at Halifax's Pier 21 in February 1954, Nicolo Rizzuto had only thirty dollars in his pocket.[8] In just a little over a decade, he would be one of the wealthiest men in Montreal. The road to Mafia chieftain was never his intended career path, however. His life of crime was the by-product of a language barrier and anti-immigrant hostility. Unfamiliar with English and French, it was difficult to pursue steady employment to support his family: wife, Libertina, and two young children, Vito and Maria.[9] Ostracized by the province's native populations, he found himself drifting

through the periphery of society. It was there that he stumbled upon a group of hapless immigrant criminals known as the Cotroni crew.

Led by Vic "the Egg" Cotroni, the gang was cut from a different cloth than most of their mob colleagues. Traditionally, membership in a Mafia family requires a candidate's ancestors to have originated from the Mediterranean island of Sicily; the Cotronis, in contrast, were from the province of Calabria, in mainland Italy. Their reputation as great earners preceded their ethnicity, however, and they were the first non-Sicilians to be inducted, or *made,* into the American Mafia. Ever distrustful of Calabrians, the Venezuelan-Sicilian Rizzuto was initially hesitant to collaborate with the Cotronis. He would only enter the fold after being repeatedly refused legitimate work due to his ethnicity.[10]

Out of an ice cream parlour called the Reggio Bar, the crew controlled the distribution of heroin across eastern Canada for the Bonnano crime family of Queens, New York.[11] For nearly three decades as the Montreal branch of the family, the Cotronis sent millions of dollars earned through plunder to their superiors south of the border. Rizzuto was the crew's principal industrial racketeer, and his artfulness in the trade resulted in his induction into the Bonnano family in 1957. A decade later, his influence in rigging construction contracts during Expo 67 made him a multi-millionaire.[12] To many, it appeared to be the perfect rags to riches story – on the eve of the nation's centennial celebrations, an immigrant had achieved the Canadian Dream, against all odds.

But Nicolo Rizzuto was a deceitful character with Machiavellian designs. Like Shakespeare's Macbeth, he possessed an insatiable appetite for power, coupled with unfounded paranoia. Ten years on, he feared that the Bonanno family had grown leery of his prosperity. He suspected that they believed he was withholding a large percentage of his weekly *tribute* – the boss' cut of all individual earnings. Regardless of whether or not this accusation was true, Rizzuto was under the impression that a contract had been issued for his death; he would need to act fast and strike first.

It took just ten gunshots to eradicate the Cotroni crew. Paolo Violi, the gang's feared enforcer, was murdered in January 1978 with a shotgun blast to the back of the head. He had been playing a game of poker at the Reggio Bar with supposed friends.[13] His brothers, Francesco and Rocco were also assassinated, killed in their mother's kitchen by a sniper perched atop a neighbouring roof. But Rizzuto's brutal reign of terror was more or less a short burst, ending with the Valentine's Day shooting of top Cotroni soldier, Pietro Sciara. Ironically, Sciara was murdered in front of his wife while leaving an Italian-language screening of *The Godfather Part II*.[14]

"The Egg" Cotroni was allowed to live, relinquishing his vast imperial holdings and exiled to a remote corner of Quebec. Also spared were Joe Di Maulo and Raynald Desjardins, Cotroni's nephew and bodyguard, respectively. The latter would eventually be recruited by Rizzuto, and acquire a top tier position in his administration. With the Calabrians out of the way, the Sicilian faction seized control of the decimated crew and agreed to a truce with the Bonanno family. This underworld Declaration of Independence, signed in blood by both belligerents, recognized the full autonomy of the newly christened Rizzuto crime family. Nicolo Rizzuto was now the Don of the Montreal Mafia, and both his allies and enemies would refer to him by a chilling new epithet: "El Padrino" – "The Godfather."

II

Five-and-a-half hours away from Montreal is the city of Vaughan, Ontario, a bustling suburb populated by large Italian, Jewish, and Russian communities.[15] Families driving to landmarks such as Canada's Wonderland or the Vaughan Mills mall are greeted by signs welcoming them to *the City Above Toronto*. Geographically, this slogan is correct, but for many years it was also an accurate representation of the city's level of criminal sophistication, which was far above that of Toronto's. Vaughan's criminal class lived in modest homes, coached their children's soccer teams, and paid their taxes on time. Like great character-actors, they absorbed every minute detail of the role, moving in social circles that associated civic status with one's charitable acts. Wearing this sheep's clothing were the Canadian members of the international 'Ndrangheta, a narcoterrorist organization with tentacles in Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Europol suspects that their annual net worth is roughly $66.4 billion, and that the society is the most technologically advanced and powerful criminal enterprise in the world.[16]

The 'Ndrangheta, like the Mafia, was born under the hot sun of the southern Italian countryside, specifically in the coastal town of Siderno, Calabria. However, unlike their pragmatic Sicilian counterparts, the 'Ndrangheta is significantly more ritualistic. Its soldiers are required to be devout Freemasons, and its leaders host an annual pilgrimage into the remote Aspromonte mountains, in Calabria.[17] Its primary activities are weapons and drug trafficking, and its insurgency in Italy is enforced through political assassinations, civilian-targeted bombings, and high-profile kidnappings. With a resume like this, it should come as no surprise that an organization as covert as the 'Ndrangheta could penetrate Canada's socio-economic infrastructures. As is the case for the Commisso clan, a pseudo-royal family whose global activities are responsible for at least 3% of Italy's GDP.[18] Looking to create an outpost in Canada's largest city, the Commissos planted a cell in Toronto's northern suburbs in the early nineteen-fifties. To build this new syndicate, they recruited dejected Italian immigrants, eager to earn a living in a climate of ethnic disadvantage. This Canadian-based branch of the Commisso 'Ndrangheta was called the Siderno Group; its territory and influence quickly grew under its inaugural leader, Rocco Zito.

The Siderno Group found friends in the Cotronis. Despite the fact that both gangs belonged to different criminal associations, their shared Calabrian heritage resulted in feelings of goodwill and mutual respect. Because of this, it is understandable that Zito would react disapprovingly to the unsanctioned 1978 murder spree that eliminated their Montreal allies. They feared that the new Rizzuto regime would focus their attention southward towards Toronto, violating the standing Bonnano-Commisso agreement that recognized the Siderno Group's sovereignty over the area. Under threat of impending war, Hamilton's Papalia crew and Musitano clan stepped in to mediate on behalf of the two sides.[19] After weeks of negotiations, a compromise was reached. The Rizzuto family would carry sole dominance in the cities of York, East York, and Toronto, first under captain Paul Volpe, and later under Pietro "Peter" Scarcella. The Siderno Group would control activities in the surrounding suburbs, namely North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough, under colonel Cosimo Staltieri and his top soldier, Carmine Verduci.[20] It was an acrimonious arrangement, but for two decades it worked.

III

In hindsight, the period between the First and Second Montreal Mob Wars was a polarizing era of opportunity and tension. Within these newly redrawn borders, boundless criminal networks grew, undisturbed. They enriched the coffers of the Mafia and 'Ndrangheta, while defiling Toronto's most vulnerable citizens. Most noticeably, impoverished communities became shooting galleries and drug dens, the side effects of a sales strategy that preyed upon juvenile delinquency.

For the Rizzuto family, international opportunity arrived in the form of a gangland coup d'etat in New York City. In an effort to restore diplomatic relations with the Bonanno family, Nicolo's son Vito volunteered to be a gunman in the 1981 murders of three upstart Bonanno captains. The assignment, while successful, appeared miniscule when compared to the Siderno Group's powerful new partnership with Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar.[21] Both were unholy alliances, but in the underworld they were tantamount to being drafted into the NFL. The two groups were now playing in the big leagues, but perhaps their newfound stature was too large for a city the size of Toronto. At the dawn of the new millennium, a climate of instability was quickly becoming a reality.

Also during this era, new players, previously relegated to the sidelines, emerged as key figures in the Canadian Mafia. Nicolo Rizzuto, long feared as the ruthless El Padrino of the Montreal underworld, announced his retirement in 1995, naming Vito his heir. His son's Jekyll and Hyde personality as both a charming businessman and brutal killer, commanded him absolute respect in the city's criminal circles. Although his father would retain the honorific title of Don, Vito became the de facto boss of the family that bore his surname.[22] He quickly promoted his sister Maria's husband, Paolo Renda, to the consultant position of consigliere; the two moved official decision-making away from the streets and onto the golf course. This new generation of Rizzutos preferred dining with Bay Street moguls, sailing yachts, and purchasing extravagant casino resorts in the Caribbean.[23] But the cigars and handshakes were all part of a carefully fabricated act. Under former Cotroni partisan Raynald Desjardins, the Montreal chapter of the Hells Angels became the family's private army. Desjardins, who had become a brother-like figure to Vito, was now a powerful generalissi-

mo, leading his legion of troops into battle whenever his boss' business dealings fell through.

IV

The true power of Canada's criminal enterprises has always been their remarkable ability to stay below the radar. That changed on April 21st, 2004. After a late-night summit with thirty senior members of the Siderno Group at the Marriott Courtyard Hotel in Vaughan,[24] Michele "Mike" Modica felt famished. Accompanied by three bodyguards, he stopped at the California Sandwiches in Downsview Park. He had barely set foot in the restaurant when a van carrying three gunmen cruised by and open fired on him. Modica's killer instincts told him to duck beneath the volley of bullets and broken glass, and he and his bodyguards escaped without a scratch. But one innocent bystander lay critically injured; a 45-year-old mother of three, named Louise Russo. The botched hit was quickly considered one of the darkest chapters in Toronto's long history, and it would finally bring Italian-Canadian organized crime from the underworld to the front page. Confined to a wheelchair, Russo became the nation's most visible advocate against gun violence. She was decorated by Queen Elizabeth II for her courage, and founded W.A.V.E. (Working Against Violence Everyday), a charity that would go on to help countless victims of violent crimes.[25] But even she could not have understood the significance of the incident that would forever change her life.

Simply put, the California Sandwiches shooting was the underworld's Cuban Missile Crisis. It was the decisive tipping point when two societies, embittered by decades of border conflicts and economic competition, were forced to finally stare each other down. Modica's presence in Toronto was worrisome for the Rizzuto family. He was the representative of the Brooklyn-based Gambino family, sent to iron out details in a multimillion-dollar gambling venture in the city.[26] To Peter Scarcella, the Rizzutos' man in Toronto, a partnership between the Gambinos and Siderno Group posed a direct threat to his family's influence in the area. He feared that the Vaughan 'Ndrangheta would emerge wealthier, larger, and more powerful than the Montreal Mafia, ultimately forcing them out of Ontario's capital. As in 1978, conspiracy theories fueled an attack against the Rizzutos' Calabrian rivals.

The would-be assassins were members of Desjardins' Hells Angels, but this time around, the bikers missed the mark. After a major public outcry, Scarcella, Modica, and the three gunmen were convicted of a laundry list of crimes and sent to prison. In an instance of unusual timing, the New York City Police Department reopened its investigation into the unsolved 1981 slayings of the three Bonanno captains. Acting on a tip from Bonanno boss-turned-government informant, Joe "The Ear" Massino, Vito was extradited to the United States to stand trial for his involvement in the mass murder. He was only found guilty of being an accomplice and sentenced to eight years in prison.

In the Colorado supermax facility that once housed Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, Vito was simply inmate 04307-748.[27] The prison was filled with men who had committed countless atrocities on American soil: al-Qaeda members, white supremacists, and Mexican cartel sicarios. Always playing the role of the gentleman among thieves, guards considered Vito a model inmate. Writing letters to his family in Montreal, the imprisoned Rizzuto chieftain wondered whether his and Scarcella's arrests would expose his family's vulnerabilities.

V

It was on this shaky ground that Salvatore "Ironworker" Montagna returned to his hometown of Montreal, in April 2009. He had been Joe Massino's successor as boss of the embattled Bonanno family, the first Canadian to hold the position. Only thirty-eight years old, his relative youth earned him the nickname "The Bambino Boss," – "The Baby Boss." But deported back to his native Canada after a gambling violation, Montagna was hungry for power.[28] With both Vito Rizzuto and Peter Scarcella out of the picture, he saw a vacuum in Montreal's underworld. Vito's temporary successor was his eldest son, Nick Jr., whose perceived inexperience and boorish behaviour had won him little respect on the streets. Taking advantage of these exposed wounds, Montagna made his way to Vaughan.

Just eight months later, Nick Rizzuto Jr. was shot and killed on Christmas morning while leaving his girlfriend's apartment in Notre-Dame-de-Grace. Shortly thereafter, Paolo Renda was abducted from a busy Montreal street in broad daylight, never to be seen again. As if the removal of the Rizzuto family's acting

boss and consigliere wasn't enough, longtime underboss, Agostino Cuntrera, was gunned down during his regular morning jog through Saint-Leonard. In all three instances, no one saw anything. According to prison officials, upon learning of the murders of his son and friend, and the disappearance of his brother-in-law, Vito Rizzuto said nothing – no tears were shed.[29] Perhaps he was in shock, or had seen it coming. Or maybe, he was quietly trying to connect the dots, unmasking the enemies at the gate. Just who in his ranks had betrayed him? What was their next move? One thing was for certain – as Vito Rizzuto sat in a cage three thousand kilometers away, unable to defend his crumbling empire, the Second Montreal Mob War had begun.

For all intents and purposes, the octogenarian Nicolo Rizzuto was out of retirement. After the deaths of his loved ones, it fell upon the frail senior to restore order in the organization he founded thirty years earlier. From Mafia Row, his family compound in Cartierville, El Padrino carried on with his business as usual. Rarely leaving his mansion, the elderly Don ran his various rackets by phone from his living room. But his captains were too anxious to work, and word quickly spread that the family had mysteriously lost control of its subordinate drug dealers.[30] With no money coming in, he focused what little energy he had left on comforting his grieving family. Over candlelit meals of fish, pasta, and homemade red wine, Nicolo and his mourning wife and daughter tried to keep the family tradition of weekly dinners alive.[31] But on November 10th, 2010, they had an uninvited guest. In the ravine behind his mansion, a camouflaged assassin waited in the shadows, focusing his crosshairs on El Padrino.[32] As the broken family toasted the men who couldn't join them for dinner, a single sniper's bullet struck Nicolo Rizzuto in the neck. He was killed instantly.

VI

The murder bore a striking resemblance to the 1978 assassinations of brothers Francesco and Rocco Violi. This symbolic gesture was the sole clue Vito Rizzuto had to work with upon his release from prison in October 2012. What he had not known was that on a crisp fall afternoon exactly three years earlier, a secret meeting was held in Vaughan. In a small yellow house surrounded by red maple trees, five men plotted the destruction of the Rizzuto Empire.[33] They called themselves the Consortium, and their complex web of intersecting business interests all found a mutual enemy in Vito Rizzuto. The fathers of this deadly confederation were: Carmine Verduci, the Toronto soldier representing Rocco Zito's Siderno Group; Sal Montagna, the exiled Bonanno boss; Ducarme Joseph, the head of the 67th Street gang that peddled Rizzuto drugs in Montreal; Joe Di Maulo, the sole surviving member of the Cotroni crew, and his brother-in-law and Hells Angels leader, Raynald Desjardins.[34]

The plan was simple; Montreal would be restored as a Bonnano family territory, just as it had been during the reign of the Cotroni crew. This new administration would be led by Di Maulo and Montagna, and enforced by the Hells Angels. All drug profits from the 67th Street gang would be diverted from the Rizzutos to the reestablished Cotronis, who would then deliver a weekly tribute to their Bonanno leaders in New York. The Siderno Group would be returned full control of Toronto, in exchange for partnership with the Bonannos on all future construction dealings in the city.

Upon learning of the conspiracy, one can only imagine how Vito reacted to the news of Desjardins' betrayal. For decades he had trusted and confided in him as if he were his own blood. Desjardins' duplicity is still cause for much debate and speculation among the nation's criminal experts. When exactly did he decide to turn against his former friend and boss? One theory is that the shift occurred sometime after the California Sandwiches fiasco, when Rizzuto reprimanded him for injuring an innocent bystander. Others say the plot began decades earlier during the first war, when the Rizzutos slaughtered Desjardins' Cotroni employers before drafting him into their camp. Loyalty had always been one of the core pillars of the Mafia's structural foundation – now it was just a word.

VII

In the immediate aftermath of the four Rizzuto murders, the Consortium appeared to be the undisputed victors. Verduci dismantled Scarcella's Toronto crew, and the Montreal captains pledged their allegiance to Montagna and Di Maulo. Vito, allegedly hiding somewhere in downtown Toronto, was outnumbered and abandoned – his surrender was thought to be imminent. The last thing anyone expected was for him to resurface in Montreal; but the carnage that

unfolded in the wake of his return was born of a man with nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

First, the body of "Ironworker" Montagna washed up on the shore of the L'Assomption River, the victim of an apparent drowning. Then, Joe Di Maulo was shot several times in his driveway in a murder that closely mirrored the killing of Nick Rizzuto Jr. Both champions of the Canadian Mafia's new order lay dead, their dreams of conquest crushed beneath them. But the rampage had just begun, and over the next year, the body count of executed Consortium plotters and sympathizers would rise to nearly twenty.

Vito's vendetta against those who had betrayed him was not limited to the streets of Montreal. The charred corpses of his former Toronto associates, Juan Fernandez and Fernando Pimentel, were found in a field in Palermo, Sicily, in May 2013. Montreal soldier Moreno Gallo, suspected of organizing the murder of Nicolo Rizzuto, was killed in Acapulco, Mexico, on the three-year anniversary of the former's assassination. But the murder I remember personally was the July 2013 shooting of Salvatore Calautti, which occurred down the street from my home in Maple, Ontario. Calautti was the Siderno Group's secret weapon; the one-man army who had personally murdered Nick Rizzuto Jr., Paolo Renda, Agostino Cuntrera, and – most notably – "El Padrino" Rizzuto.

They say those who live by the sword, die by the sword, and Calautti himself met a contract killer's ironic end. On a warm summer night, while leaving a friend's bachelor party at the Terrace Banquet Centre, he was gunned down in the middle of a deserted parking lot, along with his bodyguard, James Tusek. Despite the fact that the double homicide occurred just an earshot away from the local York Regional Police division, and was captured on surveillance footage, no suspects were ever apprehended.[35] The incident sent shockwaves throughout the community, and the Y.R.P. warned of more casualties to come.

When Calautti was killed, the playing field was leveled. But when Raynald Desjardins and top bikers were later imprisoned on murder charges, the Consortium was left fighting a war with no army. Now, its two surviving dignitaries were left to fend for themselves. Ducarme Joseph and Carmine Verduci both knew the war was a lost cause; all of their allies were either killed or imprisoned, and neither of them had the desire to sit on Montreal's vacant throne. Through intermediaries, they reached out to the fractured Rizzutos, proposing a ceasefire. Vito's response was prompt – Joseph's bullet-ridden body was later dumped in the middle of a busy street in central Montreal.

The conflict had long passed the point of diplomacy, and negotiation was not a viable option for the deposed Rizzuto. In his eyes, the war could have only one conclusion: the complete annihilation of anyone who had challenged his authority and harmed those closest to him. He was not concerned with rebuilding his organization; he only sought retribution. But Vito Rizzuto would never live to see the fruits of his labour. He passed away suddenly of undiagnosed lung cancer, a day shy of Christmas Eve 2013.[36] Compared to his father, son, brother-in-law, friends, and enemies, all of whom had met violent ends, it was a somewhat peaceful way to go. On his deathbed, Vito's final directive to his disciples was for the destruction of his Calabrian rivals.[37]

Keeping their word, the bloodiest chapter of the Second Montreal Mob War came to a close on the afternoon of April 24th, 2014. Outside the Regina Sports Café in Vaughan, Carmine Verduci, after months in hiding, was shot several times while entering his car. As he lay face down on the hot tarmac, a single stream of blood flowed towards a nearby sidewalk, signaling the end of the punctured Consortium. But while his blaring car alarm seemed to imitate the goal horn in a hockey game, no side emerged victorious. The Rizzuto crime family ceased to exist, reduced to a powerless street gang under the command of young and inexperienced gangsters.

VIII

The demise of the Siderno Group came in late January 2016, with the murder of its elusive leader, Rocco Zito. Like Nicolo Rizzuto six years earlier, the elderly 'Ndrangheta Don was murdered in his home, in front of his family, in a safe neighbourhood. Perhaps this is the perfect metaphor for the violence that is allowed to fester into our communities, unchecked. For what really was the catalyst of the Second Montreal Mob War? Was it the 1978 Cotroni conflict, the California Sandwiches shooting, or the murder of Nick Rizzuto Jr.? Perhaps the germ manifested even earlier, when a family of immigrant farmers was forced into crime because of bigotry.

Time and time again we ask ourselves how such heinous acts could occur in seemingly advanced societies, yet we fail to recognize our own culpability as human beings. We are liable when we dismiss entire groups of people with generalizations; we are responsible when we view differences as threats; we are accountable when we strip communities of essential resources needed to survive. History has shown us that crime is born of desperation and disillusionment, and yet we are still foolish enough to ask, "Why does this continue to happen?" Maybe if we were just a little more welcoming all those years ago, the Rizzutos, Cotronis, and Commissos would be just like any of the other families on your street. Maybe a mother would still be walking, and a family could enjoy a meal together, in peace. We created these monsters, and this long tale of destruction should not serve as a warning, but a lesson. It is an issue of intolerance, and until we look within ourselves to repair it, massacres like the one in Montreal will keep occurring, in a relentless circle.

EPILOGUE

In the year 1057, King Roger I of Sicily ordered his knights to invade the former Byzantine colony of Riva (present-day, Reggio Calabria).[38] Thousands of Calabrian women and children were enslaved and sold to labourers across North Africa. The surviving males were forced to complete peasant work under their new Sicilian masters for the next seven hundred years.

Glossary

Mafia (English: Bravado, Swagger), also known as **La Cosa Nostra** (English: Our Thing) – A Sicilian criminal syndicate formed in the 1850s. The secret society is divided into large families. Each family is vertically structured, similar to a modern corporation. Its administrative level consists of a supreme Boss (or *Don, Godfather)*, an Underboss (who serves as the second-in-command), and a Counselor/*Consigliere* (who provides tactical advice for key decision making). Beneath this executive branch is middle management. This level is controlled by Captains/*Caporegimes* – gang leaders who control small crews of 10-15 soldiers. Membership in a Mafia family requires a candidate to be a white male of Sicilian descent, who has proven his loyalty by committing at least one murder. All members are required to uphold the oath of *Omerta,* a code of confidentiality that is enforced by death. A crew's soldiers complete the criminal work, and all profit flows upwards from the captains to the boss. The organization's American counterpart was formed in 1931 by Charles "Lucky" Luciano, and is dominated by the Five Families of the New York City Commission: Gambino, Bonnano, Genovese, Lucchese, and Colombo.

'Ndrangheta [pronunciation: En-drag-etta] (English: Heroism, Virtue) – A Calabrian narcoterrorist organization formed in the 1860s. Unlike the Sicilian Mafia, the 'Ndrangheta relies heavily upon Calabrian bloodlines. The organization is divided into hereditary clans, all led by a Captain/*Capo,* and an intermediary known as the 236th Day Master. All senior members are called Colonels, and they each oversee a jurisdictional territory known as a Locale. Each locale consists of junior members known as Soldiers. The clans are supervised by a collegial body known as *La Provincia*/The Province, which is intended to mediate relations between them. All members of the 'Ndrangheta are required to be Freemasons, in order to cultivate political connections. They are also required to be fluent in the society's secret language. The 'Ndrangheta's largest presence is in Italy (Commisso clan), Canada (Siderno Group), and Australia (Honoured Society).

*all terms defined in author's own words, through prior knowledge.

Don't Shoot the Messenger

by Chrys Vilvang

It's almost the same thing every single time. I am biking around aimlessly, awaiting a notification from a nearby restaurant. Eventually my phone starts vibrating and I see that the restaurant is actually not so nearby, about twenty minutes away actually, if I hurry. I will not start getting paid until I have picked up the food so it is in my best interest to get to the restaurant as soon as possible.

Gliding in and out of cars and buses, trying to obey traffic laws and avoid collisions, none of this is made any easier by the giant insulated backpack I have on but I still manage to get to the restaurant unscathed and in relatively good time. After frantically searching for a place to lock my bike I can enter the restaurant and finally pick up the food, or so you would think.

Usually the pickup occurs during peak restaurant hours, meaning my customer has elected to avoid the crowds and chaos by sending me to do their dirty work. Of course in this case I have two customers, the restaurant employees and the person who is impatiently waiting for me to deliver their meal. If you have ever mistaken courteous service for genuine kindness, I recommend you try picking up food as a third party delivery person and seeing how the restaurant staff will deal with you. With the hope for a gratuity removed from the equation and in-house customers to contend with, I can usually hope to have my presence acknowledged after about ten minutes of desperate inquiry. Of course acknowledging my presence does not necessarily mean that the package is ready to go.

Often they disappear into the kitchen to return with the news that the order is not quite ready, occasionally they admit that they accidentally summoned me too early, sometimes they tell me there is a separate entrance for pickups and I am in fact waiting in the wrong place. Once I have made my presence known and am confident I am waiting for the right order in the right place, I can start to relax, although this relaxation is tenuous, as I still will not be making any money until the order is ready. When the moment finally comes, my hopefulness usually switches to exasperation upon discovering that I am delivering an improperly sealed bowl of soup, or four chocolate milkshakes without a cardboard tray. As long as there is no hope for an order to be successfully transported more than three feet, you can count on the restaurant to provide you with the necessary packaging.

Once some kind of tape or saran wrap contraption has been constructed, I carefully place the delivery in my bag and set off towards the destination. The race is now on as I am aware that the customer is tracking my progress through their phone, and every wrong turn or traffic impasse is another point against my prospective tip, so I'd better hustle. There is a slightly different approach to darting through traffic with a hot meal in your backpack; the abrupt stops and sharp turns tend to ruffle the contents. It usually isn't entirely clear until I arrive that the address I have is in fact only the street number of a gargantuan high rise condominium, with hundreds of individual units and no further indication of where or how to deliver the food.

My delivery screen usually provides me with the customer's first name and last initial. If I'm feeling lucky I can try to navigate some of the more modern building directories and make an educated guess as to what suite I will have to buzz. I can also try flagging the concierge by pounding on the glass and turning to reveal the food delivery bag on my back. After a brief muffled negotiation with the concierge they will usually agree to let me into the lobby, where I can launch my explanation of why I am trying to get into the building. The names on the order rarely correspond to the names on the concierge's directory so we deliberate on how best to contact the customer. They usually decide it would be best if I phone, verify the name with the one in the directory, hand my phone over to the concierge and have the customer grant a blessing to get me into the elevator. That is of course the best-case scenario, as most customers don't answer the calls.

I often wonder how someone who has used their phone to place an order, and track my delivery every

step of the way, has for some reason at this particular moment left their phone in another room, on silent, or even turned off. Eventually some kind of deal is made and I proceed through the lobby towards the elevators. From what I can tell, approximately one third of all the elevators in Toronto are out of service, so the time between pushing the up button and actually getting inside the elevator can seem to take as long as the trip to the building in the first place. If this isn't the actual case it can certainly feel this way, as the payment is made according to distance travelled on the ground and will not account for the vertical distance covered in the elevator. If the bag seemed cumbersome while navigating the streets, this feature is magnified when attempting to cram into a crowded elevator of residents who are usually unhappy to have a stranger in the building to begin with.

Once I have finally emerged on the correct floor I can start to navigate the labyrinth of identical hallways that comprise the windowless interiors of these massive residential monoliths. When the suite has finally been located I knock loudly at the door to announce my arrival. A dog may bark, I may hear a television, occasionally an interior conversation, yet somehow this final step of the process still manages to drag on. On my side I attempt to verify that the contents are still intact and that there have been no major spillages or inversions. When the door finally opens I am greeted with the unhappy face of a partially clothed individual who looks as though they may not have been in natural sunlight for months.

I attempt to confirm the name and order number as the package is snatched from me; a subdued gesture or a muffled grunt is usually enough to ensure that I am at the right place. No tip. The door slams in my face. The delivery is complete, but the hallways and elevators of these buildings tend to be spotty with cell phone reception. I must wait until I am back on the street to 'complete' the action on my phone and start waiting for my next order. I am finally at the in-between, the precious moments after one delivery and before the next. I push the down button and start to reflect.

Does everyone seem to be mad at me because they are hungry and have been waiting for too long? Am I projecting my general disdain for this work onto the customers that make use of the service? Of course not everybody greets me with the general malaise I have come to associate with the drop off; there are even occasions where people seem happy and relieved to be able to start their social evening meal. I've even been tipped a couple of times. As I've gradually worked it out though, it seems to me that there is major difference in the disposition of a customer according to where, and more specifically, how far off the ground they live.

I am faced with two glaring questions. Why do people choose to live in urban spaces? Why do people choose to go to restaurants? My fundamental understanding of these seemingly obvious questions has been inverted by my experiences as a delivery person in Toronto. It is from this instability that I have launched this investigation into the conditions surrounding high-rise living, based on my limited interactions with the residents who call these towers home.

Having been born in Vancouver in 1989, some of my earliest memories are of the view across False Creek from my modest three-storey apartment complex. Looking across into downtown, the historic Sun Tower skyscraper used to dominate the east side skyline. I remember looking over from the same point through the years as the building was gradually surrounded and dwarfed by adjacent high-rise developments. Nowadays you can't even see the tower through the gigantic mess of steel and glass that has sprouted across the land in between my first home and one of the city's most cherished heritage buildings.

The disappearance of my beloved view happened over the course of several years, but I can still recall the exact moment when I realized the developers had gone too far. This moment is oddly enough not solely attached to the emergence of a new development, but also to the mythology of a great restaurant. Carlos N' Buds was an iconic Tex-Mex restaurant in downtown Vancouver that was housed in the remains of a former auto body repair shop. The kitschy interior décor was plastered with images and memorabilia from around the world with no unifying theme; any chance to sit at a new table was a chance to soak in a new world of toys, funny signs, photographs, or just about anything else. In the summer the old garage doors of the repair shop would open up to create a terrace lined with picnic tables for outdoor dining. With a birthday in late August, it should come as no surprise that I elected to throw

my party there every year. I used to love giving tours of the images and artefacts I found most hilarious; a picture of my former lacrosse coach dressed in drag holding a pitcher, a urinal hung six feet in the air inviting customers to "Go where the Grizzlies go!" (The Vancouver Grizzlies were still in the NBA at this point).

One day, as my birthday was approaching, my mother and I happened to drive by the restaurant and noticed that it was surrounded by a fence. Further investigation revealed that the windows had been boarded up. My hope that it was simply closed for renovations was destroyed by a sign indicating that the property had been acquired by a developer. It was the end of an era. I didn't even get to say goodbye. I didn't even get a last meal. The auto body shop turned restaurant was demolished shortly thereafter, replaced by an unremarkable condo, almost identical to any other in the neighbourhood. It has become a symbolic tombstone for my childhood memories.

These two entangled events undoubtedly sparked my longstanding aversion to this type of development, but having left Vancouver nearly a decade ago for a series of less-rapidly growing cities, these emotions laid largely dormant. It wasn't until I moved to Toronto that I noticed how strong this distaste still was. But surely the people living inside these buildings weren't to blame for the problems I had come to associate with them? In fact, in many of these high-density manufactured neighbourhoods there isn't a restaurant around for miles, which leads me back to what launched this investigation in the first place.

I had always taken it as a given that people who elected to live in the close quarters of urban environments had done so to be near the excitement and amenities the city has to offer. But a stroll through most of the lakefront developments in Toronto will quickly reveal how little excitement these unnatural neighbourhoods possess. Part of the issue is that rapid development often replaces and washes over the historic characteristics of a place as it was; after all, there is no new restaurant on the ground floor of the building where Carlos N' Buds used to be.

There is another situation though, one that is equally problematic. This occurs when these types of developments emerge in neighbourhoods that have no commercial history. Old train yards and industrial sites that no longer serve their purpose are developed into freshly branded vertical communities, but the ratio of residents to restaurants in these unnatural spaces fails to serve the needs or desires of these distinct urban populations.

The Wonder Years once described the suburbs as a place with 'all the disadvantages of the city, and none of the advantages of the country, and vice versa'[1]. What my experience as a food delivery person has shown me is that there is an even less appealing residential environment emerging in the 21st century. People who find themselves drawn to seemingly luxurious urban developments and planned communities have adopted the necessary de-sensitivities for urban living, but with no access to the restaurants or the excitement of a traditionally dense environment, they may find themselves closed off or unreceptive to the world around them. The overwhelming majority of meals I deliver are for one.

The types of restaurants that lend themselves to the modern cellular food delivery apps are the ones who previously had no reason to bring food to people outside of their location. These are not the Domino's and Swiss Chalets of the city. They are places that depend not only on the quality of their dishes, but also on the abilities of their waiting staff, and the character of their atmosphere. They cultivate reputations based on creating an experience for their customers. They may rely on a local clientele just as they may become destinations for visitors from across the city, country, or world. Or at least they used to do these things…

The allure of the modern residential condo is partially tied to the buzz of urban living, but also to the belief that one can experience peacefulness when comfortably elevated above the grittiness of the city streets. But to live in a high-rise where the characteristics of a neighbourhood or a community do not exist at street level is to experience the downside of urban life with none of the upside. To order a meal from a fancy restaurant in a cool neighbourhood and have it schlepped to your cross-town isolation chamber, to be devoured in front of the television, only further reveals the flaws of these increasingly popular vertical environments.

At this point, the chime of the arriving elevator brings me back to reality. The doors slide open and I smile at the person already inside; surprisingly, they

smile back. A few more people filter in on the way down; one of them pushing a stroller, one of them holding a dog. The dog barks and the child giggles, in this moment we seem to be all right in each other's company. The door opens to the lobby and I spring towards the exit, pausing briefly to thank the concierge. They acknowledge me, apparently relieved that I don't seem to have committed any major offenses while in the building. There is a person with a matching backpack trapped in the vestibule, trying desperately to figure out the building directory. We share a grin and I hold the door open for them on my way out.

Back on the street I have regained cell phone service. I 'complete' the action on the app and unlock my bike. As I'm about to ride away, my phone vibrates; another order is ready for pickup. There isn't much happening in this neighbourhood and I see that I am actually headed back to the same restaurant where I picked up the previous order. I wonder if I will be delivering this next one back to the same building as well? Encouraged by that small exchange between the dog and the child, I rush towards the restaurant. I hope that this time, I'll at least be picking up a meal for two.

Uncomfortable Neighbours: Southern Ontario's Urban and Green Spaces

by Jeremie Warshafsky

We pulled up to a line of cars at the side of the road, people of all ages emerging from their vehicles. Mark, a middle-aged, cheerful guy clad in khakis, boots and a Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) vest, came over to us. He greeted us and ticked off our names on his clipboard. Welcoming us to the area, he told us we could wait with everyone at the top of the hill over there, just beyond the

fence of the property. We made our way to the group of people, approximately 30 in total, and looked at the valley where we would hike for the next few hours. The fall colours were out in full force, a characteristic view in southern Ontario: patches of multicoloured forests sandwiched between plots of agricultural land. The sun bathed the landscape in shadows, emphasizing the colours and textures of the vegetation.

To the south of where we stood was the Happy Valley forest area, one of the largest intact deciduous forests left in the Oak Ridges Moraine, a geological formation north of Toronto dominated by glacial deposits from the most recent ice age. These deposits formed during the recession of the Laurentide ice sheet and cover an area of approximately 1,900 km^2 stretching from Bolton, west of Toronto, to Cobourg, east of the city.[1] It is an area characterized by river valleys and hills possessing particularly nutrient-rich soils due to the deposition of sediment, making ideal growing conditions for flora.

We moved towards the valley, down the first hill, freshly planted with young coniferous trees in neat rows. "Part of the rehabilitation project," Mark told us. I couldn't help but think that trees don't care about neat lines.

As we hiked through the newly protected valley, Mark pointed out some trees of interest and explained to us the process behind his organization. The reason the NCC wanted the area protected is that it is well on its way to becoming old growth, a climax stage in the life of a forest when it is most complex; exhibiting a number of ecological features unique to that abundant stage in its life, most importantly a high biodiversity. As you can imagine, these forests are only able to reach this stage of their life cycle by having been left relatively undisturbed. Not all the trees are necessarily old, but each tree age is represented in an old-growth community, allowing the forest to regenerate properly when a "giant" reaches the end of its life. (The oldest tree we saw was 150, young by tree standards when White Spruce live to be 1300 years old). The NCC recognized the ecological significance of this valley and has worked with landowners, government and other NGO's to obtain the pieces of property needed to protect this area. Mark showed us a map of the valley overlaid with yellow blocks denoting the property plots, a puzzle of bureaucratic hoops to jump through to compile a cohesive ecological unit.

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I grew up on Cedarvale Park in Toronto, my family moved into that house when I was three. I was spoiled having such a large park in my backyard, one that also has a ravine at the south end of it. I remember the hours I spent traversing the steep hills, navigating the logs that crossed the swamps and streams and running through the open fields with my dog. The rotten smell of swamp still sticks with me, pulling me back to that period in my life every time I come across it.

When I was little the park was endless, but that impression has slowly shifted and the park now seems smaller. Today I see it as a pocket of trees within the city, a vestige of the once-extensive ravine system that marked the land Toronto now rests on. Many of the rivers that carved out the ravines are buried, having been filled in as residents swelled the city (RIP Garrison Creek). They were seen as hindrances, landforms in the way of development. What exists today are areas that couldn't be filled in, where rivers couldn't be channelled or buried or the highways were too large for the valleys.

That attitude is changing; the city is beginning to

Happy Valley. Jeremie Warshafsky, 2016.

Cedarvale Park 1. Jeremie Warshafsky, 2014.

recognize the importance of the ravines as valuable green spaces for human enjoyment that also provide beneficial ecosystem services and habitat for biodiversity. Once forgotten places, fragmented by the asphalt of the city, these ravines might have a new life. The city is working on its first comprehensive ravine strategy, a document outlining the importance of these spaces and how we can keep them, use them and appreciate them.

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Trees and fungi have formed a symbiotic relationship termed mycorrhiza. The fungi interact with the roots below the soil and aid the tree in nutrient-harvesting in return for some of the sugars produced by the tree. The fungi connect roots to neighbouring trees and eventually the whole forest becomes a single unit of interconnected organisms. The extent of nutrient- and water-sharing is so integral that a stump can be kept alive for hundreds of years after the death of the trunk and crown. Trees talk to each other through this root network as pheromones and chemical compounds pass between them, and trees depend on this dialogue to maintain a homeostatic environment for all the trees in the forest. They work as a unit to maintain an optimal habitat through mechanisms such as transpiration that cools the air and shading so that less water evaporates from the ground. Trees interact with and manicure their own habitat.

Trees on city streets are usually contained in planters, on a lawn, or the occasional patch of parkland. We isolate the trees by cutting off their roots from their peers and put them at a disadvantage right from the start. They can't share nutrients and must put up with poor soil, water and heat conditions that make life difficult for them. An insect infestation can decimate populations of trees since they don't receive warning from neighbouring trees, leaving no time to prepare for the coming onslaught.

Lawns and parkland are slightly better, allowing more breathing space and potential root connections. Unfortunately we manicure the areas around them and force trees to grow where they can't influence their environment.

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Trees are a symbol of natural space. If there is a tree present, that place is deemed healthy. Green space has become synonymous with tree space so much so that Toronto calls our neighbourhoods, with their pruned lawns and foliage, the lungs of the city. On one hand that's true: trees do clean the air and reduce the urban heat island effect. But it is a far cry from the full range of ecosystem services—the very ones that we *depend* on for our own survival—that a mature forest can provide for us. We should be planting trees, but recognizing the limitations of that practice is necessary to understand what we are really doing to the land around us and the effect it's having on our own health as a city. We require a productive forest, and we should be planting trees, but we should also foster the network they need to thrive. But a city isn't a forest; can those two spaces ever coexist? And if they can, how should that look?

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There was a tree in my backyard when I was growing up. It was a Catalpa tree, most likely a northern Catalpa also known as *Catalpa speciosa*. They are deciduous trees, 12–18 metres high with large canopies of lobed, heart-shaped leaves. They produce fragrant white flowers the size of a loonie in the spring and long beans by the end of the summer. I loved my tree.

It was cut down at about the age of 80, the diameter of the trunk a metre across. When it was gone, the backyard felt empty and exposed, the once omniscient canopy no longer protecting me from the sky.

This isn't the only tree I love(d). There are trees in my neighbourhood I check up on from time to time, noting how they have grown over the summer. Old trees whose bark is deeply furrowed, or whose trunk is thick as a doorframe are of particular interest to me (like the silver maple at Christie St. and Barton Ave.). I won't downplay my excitement when a young tree is planted though, knowing it has the potential to grow into something magnificent. I know most of the species in Toronto—the Kentucky coffee tree being a particular favourite—and the distinction between each type of oak, subtle but present.

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There is not much old growth left in Ontario. The most comprehensive guide to Ontario's old growth, *Ontario's Old-Growth Forests: A Guidebook Complete*

Cedarvale Park 2. Jeremie Warshafsky, 2014

Cedarvale Park 3. Jeremie Warshafsky, 2014

with History, Ecology, and Maps, by Michael Henry and Peter Quinby, lists 59 stands of old growth left.[2] This sounds good and bad. For a province so heavily populated, and with a strong forestry sector, it is amazing that there is any old growth left. On the other hand, the definition of these "stands" is somewhat loose: a stand could be a few aged trees in a larger park—a bit of a stretch considering the lack of a complex tree network and diverse ecosystem that develop in an old-growth forest. Have we really come to a point where 10 old-growth trees are something we celebrate?

The answer is yes, unfortunately, because we have reached that point. Accounts from European arrival to the region describe trees that were 200–300 feet tall and whose trunks were 6 feet in diameter, giants that we can only imagine today since our largest pale in comparison to what existed.[3] Historical images confirm these eyewitness reports. People began extracting these resources at an unsustainable rate. Populations in the region grew too large and by the time people understood the effect they had on forest ecosystems, it was already too late. Even now we are unwilling to give up our way of life. Imagine the government of Ontario saying that 95% of land is protected; you can harvest the other 5%. We are too apathetic to go back, our lives are too short to understand how old a tree can get.

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The Ontario Greenbelt was established in 2005. The plan sought to control urban growth in Canada's fastest growing region, the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and to protect natural resources, green space and farmland for its inhabitants. The region had seen explosive population growth in the preceding decades, spurring urban sprawl and putting pressure on environmentally sensitive areas. On a map, the greenbelt does in fact look like a green belt, containing the grey urban zones from pushing outwards. The band stretches around the municipalities that border the western shore of lake Ontario, with fingers poking east (of Toronto) to encompass the Oak Ridges Moraine, and stretching up into the Bruce Peninsula following the jagged Niagara Escarpment.

The Greenbelt management plan breaks down the region into land use categories that denote what can occur on that particular land. The largest designation is "protected countryside," encompassing all types of agricultural land.[4] This category aims to maintain productive farmland supplying food to the regions' 9.7 million inhabitants (2016)[5]. Further broken down into 7 categories of farmland, each section allows an increasing amount of agricultural productivity. This category includes cropland, livestock and particular high-profit crop areas such as grapes and peaches in the "Tender fruit and cropland" of the Niagara region.

"Natural heritage systems" include ecologically significant regions, areas that are protected outright with very little human activity besides management.[6] These are forests and watersheds that provide ecosystem services to the inhabitants of the region. Within natural heritage systems, the largest subcategory is the "natural core areas" dotted across the landscape, connected by the smaller but arguably more important "Linkage areas." The linkage areas provide avenues for species to travel, and rivers and streams to maintain buffer zones around them. At first glance, you would suspect that farmland was placed around these parts, but in reality they are the leftover areas that were unable to be cropland at one time, much like the Happy Valley Forest and Toronto's ravine system.

Lastly, "urban areas" are regions of high population density (cities, towns and villages) that now must increase density and infill projects to accommodate a growing population. And the time of urban sprawl isn't necessarily behind us: even though developers currently have no ability to encroach onto greenbelt land, recent petitions have threatened to undo Ontario's protection of the Greenbelt, allowing developers to access and build into the region.[7] Supporters of the Greenbelt fear that acceptance of these petitions could have a snowball effect: give them a little and they take a lot.

Farmland protection is also important, as it provides some level of food safety for individuals. On the spectrum of environmentally productive areas, farms fall somewhere in the middle of these classifications: better than urban areas, but less productive than forests. If people are going to live in southern Ontario, we also need to protect their food security, and shipping food from elsewhere isn't sustainable.

Currently the Greenbelt provides a benchmark for what is reasonable management. We could do better, make the rules stricter, and make our efforts

Scarborough Bluffs. Jeremie Warshafsky, 2014

St Clair West Pocket. Jeremie Warshafsky, 2015

greater, but now that these rules are in place, we can focus on making the forest we have left as productive as it can be. To manage such a large population and provide a clean set of ecosystem services for inhabitants inevitably leads to tradeoffs. All of southern Ontario cannot become forested again. Not only would it take hundreds of years to allow the forest to return to what it was, but also I am unsure if that is truly feasible. Now that our criteria have shifted, how do we make the land we have better?

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Eyeing the dark brown water, it's hard to believe the Don River valley used to be more polluted than it is today. As recently as 1967, multiple sites along the Don, and many of Toronto's ravines, were used as landfills. Around 80 landfill sites[8] are documented, but it is almost a certainty that there were more that have been forgotten. One such case was discovered in 2001 in the Humber River valley. Toxically high levels of lead, ammonia, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) were reported. The pollutants were followed and a dumpsite was discovered that city officials were previously unaware of at King's Mill Park.[9]

A simultaneously humorous and dark anecdote concerns an episode that occurred in 1958, during Princess Margaret 's visit to Toronto. She was set to visit the Don, but the water was so polluted that a team was sent to the banks to clean up the debris. Unfortunately, the stink remained and their solution involved dumping chlorine and perfume upstream, timed so that the chemicals would waft past the princess as she visited the river, masking the river's putrid odours. Instead of being a wake-up call to the dire situation the Don was in, the city considered the stunt a success, leaving the river valley polluted for a number of decades more.[10]

Before the river got bad, subsequently worse, and then comparatively a bit better, and before the valley was a hotbed for multiple dump sites throughout Toronto's history, the river was, of course, naturally clean. I've seen historical images that show people on the banks of the river sometime in the early 20th century. I remember my grandfather telling me that he used to swim in that water, while some Torontonians would even fish there. Ask most people today and that sounds crazy.

If it wasn't for citizen efforts to clean up the valley, I imagine it would still be in even more unbelievable condition. In 1989, concerned citizens gathered at the Ontario Science Centre to discuss reducing pollution and reinvigorating the "natural" environment of the valley, they also established the "Task Force to Bring Back the Don." Their work ranged from advising city council on Don-related issues to cleaning up polluted sites and even rehabilitating certain zones with plantings.

I participated in one of their events. My friend and I were in grade 12 and felt the need to drive from our homes in the west end of the city to the Don Valley and Eglinton Avenue area. We helped them weed and remove invasive species in a clearing and even got to plant a tree in a zone they were trying to reforest. Since that day I haven't returned to the site, but I have visited other parts of the Don Valley. Although people aren't swimming and relaxing on the riverbanks, I've seen kayakers and canoers drifting down the valley. A few have even begun to fish there again. Toronto has a plan in the works to "Re-naturalize the mouth of the Don" where it empties into Lake Ontario (at one point in time it was the largest marshland on Lake Ontario). Further upstream, a park has been proposed, with more "re-naturalized" areas, multiuse trails and educational signage to get people using the Don and understand how to interact with it in a responsible way.

If the "Task Force to Bring Back the Don" was any indication, it proves that a little effort goes a long way. I think in my mind the Don will always be a dirty place, but having grown up here and hearing about how polluted it was for such a long time, it's hard to imagine it as anything else. Perceptions are hard to change. But I'm looking forward to seeing if the city's new, comprehensive ravine and green space strategy can return the Don to its former glory.[11] I might even swim in the river one day.

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The Greater Toronto Area's (GTA's) population is growing by approximately 100,000 people a year. The government has enacted numerous growth guidelines as this trend became apparent: this is a fast growing region with little regulation. Ontario's *Places to Grow*[12] act and the Greenbelt are two examples of legislature meant to control it. These guidelines apply to Toronto but are meant for Ontario

as a whole trying to get ahead of the global trend towards urbanization.

Urbanization presents a new paradigm for the world; never before have such a large percentage of humans lived in urban areas. This has shifted our relationship with nature for decades to come. Exposure to these areas helps appreciate an understanding of them, but when an idea of natural is contained in a park or an hour drive outside the city, our notions can change. Without constant reminders, people can lose sight of the importance of natural space and basic rights such as access to freshwater. Our habits in urban environments, Toronto included, pave over these spaces and the life necessities they provide for us. We increasingly become unaware of our impact as more natural and rural spaces disappear, widening the gap from our urban spaces quite literally. [13]

Toronto, I like to think, is trying to prevent this. The *Sustaining and Expanding Urban Forest* guidelines for example dictate that growth should not get in the way of maintaining or expanding the urban forest.[14] The city has bylaws in place directing developers on rules they must follow when planning a site, yet it seems that putting a 40-story tower, making the sidewalks slightly wider and planting trees in concrete holes are still acceptable. Developers' first goal is to make money: they run a business and maximizing the use of the building—while doing the bare minimum in accordance with city bylaws—makes business sense. Stricter and more far-reaching regulations need to be in place, because most businesses will find a way to do as little as possible to benefit anyone but themselves—often at the expense of citizens and our environment.

Which leads me to think that we don't have good policies. Maybe in the past we have done so poorly at maintaining a relationship with green space that I consider anything to be better than before. Then I think, maybe the issue is with people. And when I run down that line of thinking I get quite upset, so I either distract myself or try to convince myself there is a bit of hope around. Maybe I go for a walk in the park with my dog and I feel better, a bit more relaxed, and I come to recognize that this issue is complex and stems from years of misunderstanding the ecology of our city. But there is a chance that when I step back onto the concrete, and a bus roars past me, that understanding will be lost.

Forty-eight years, one month and two weeks.

by Peter Watson

I had made it forty-eight years, one month and two weeks. What was the average, and does such a gruesome statistic even exist? Regardless, surely that's a significant amount of time.

When you encounter your first dead body there's an instant realisation that something is now different, unfamiliar, alarming, and you are now forever altered. Nevertheless, the only question spinning around in my head was whether I should I have stopped my vehicle and got out.

Growing up, my only exposure to scenes of death were via the TV and photographs. Not in real time, always recorded earlier that day. So while my mother prepared the evening meal, the news would inform you of the latest IRA terrorist attack, who was killed and how many were injured. As a child in England during the 70s and 80s, a desensitization to "The Troubles" in Ireland was occurring. This was coupled with a sense of unexpected violence via crude but effective homemade explosives. In one

instance, the IRA had placed a bomb under a bathtub in a hotel room in my hometown of Brighton. It had been installed with a 30-day delayed timer. The hotel was in an area that my friends and I would hang out at on weekends, close to the cinema, shops and amusement arcades. When it detonated in the early hours of October 12, 1984, it immediately killed five people, with the intended target, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, escaping the collapse of the middle section of the building.

When images of the victims were shown on TV, the bodies were covered up by a blanket with only the feet exposed, as if a dead person's lower extremities are the least shocking thing to see. Or maybe it's a way of making you grow accustomed to a corpse: the blanket revealing a little bit more of the lifeless body each time, until finally you are ready to view the face of death. For some reason, the blankets were always a dark shade of gray with two red stripes running down either edge. The kind you would associate with the British National Health service of that era. On the few occasions I found myself in a hospital's accident and emergency room, the mandatory gray blanket was placed on me. With its fibrous texture guaranteed to irritate your skin and to certify life, my feet would always be covered up.

A couple of weeks before my first encounter with a dead body, my mother, who had always harboured a fear of anything medical, had been forced by a sudden drop in appetite to be admitted to hospital. My recollection of her when I was young was of someone whose outgoing personality would draw you in. Her friends were ones she'd had for life, and she would never miss the chance to send a birthday or Christmas card to relatives, especially if that relative was a child. The card would always contain a small amount of money, and on receipt of the card, a quiet voice would be on the phone thanking Auntie Mary. In later life, her hearing faded and she refused to wear any devices, which meant she often seemed left out of conversations, sinking into her own singular world.

I had visited her in hospital every day, with little or no sign of improvement. I had to work that ominous Saturday and was unable to see her, but had made plans to go the following morning on Mother's Day.

As I drove North on Highway 427, I noticed the traffic was slowing down. I had agreed to photograph a corporate event near Toronto's Pearson Airport, and immediately wondered if I should try and get off the highway and take an alternative route. As I waited to use the first available exit road, I noticed a white limo on the extreme left-hand shoulder. Having been a wedding photographer in a former life, my immediate reaction was to assume that the bride or the couple's limo had broken down either en route to their wedding or reception. Not that unusual, it had happened to me a couple of times. On one occasion, I had been asked to photograph a couple's journey from the church to their reception from inside a limo. The driver had crossed a set of streetcar tracks just as a streetcar was approaching. We collided, and the limo spun around, resulting in the side of the vehicle being torn apart like a can-opener attacking a piece of tin. The impact threw everyone to the other side of the limo, and it was remarkable no one was hurt. After the police were called, we all walked the remaining short distance to the wedding reception, with nothing more taken from the incident than an anecdote for the speeches.

So as I got closer to the limo on the highway, I wondered if the couple had already vacated the vehicle and were laughing with their guests about how breaking down on the road, hopefully, wasn't a bad omen for married life. To my surprise, the cars in front where now slowly filtering from the middle, where I was, to the right-hand lane. That's when I saw what looked like the back end of a flatbed pickup truck, stationary in the middle lane with its hazard lights on. Still thinking this was part of the white limo's predicament, I was now a little confused as to why it was not in front or behind the limo on the hard shoulder. Slowly inching forward, I became concerned about being late for my corporate engagement. It was the first time I had worked for this particular company, and these could be lucrative events. I was keen to impress, so being late was unthinkable.

Now the cars in front were veering even more to the right with their wheels straddling the lines on the road. Something had caught my eye on the left, towards the side of the tow truck. It appeared to be a brown leather messenger bag on the ground, then some paper, and finally a shoe. I had a sense of foreboding of what was to follow, unable to come up with a reasonable scenario of how a single shoe could be in the middle lane of the 427. It was his feet I saw first, one with a sock exposed, the other cov-

ered with a shoe matching the one from a few yards behind.

All the time, my vehicle was moving under its own momentum, the accelerator pedal unused. The cars were all progressing in single file, like a funeral procession. But the stranger's body, rather than being part of this movement in a hearse, was lying face down on the road. The only visible sign of injury I could see was the pool of blood around his head. I recalled thinking how stunningly red and gelatinous the blood was, and not at all watery as I expected it to be. Then came the assumption that this was in fact a dead body… wasn't it? There was no one else I recall seeing nearby, but there had to be someone—the tow truck driver or the occupants of the white limo. But where were they? The police or emergency services hadn't even arrived yet. Surely someone had checked for a pulse, returned to their vehicles for safety and phoned ahead to the wedding reception venue to explain the lateness.

Of course, this all took place in a few seconds, but like people say at times of stress: it did seem a lot longer. How many vehicles had driven past the body before me? A hundred? Fifty? Ten, or less? Looking back, I don't think the amount is relevant, because I had not stopped.

Would I have stopped if I wasn't rushing to get to work? Like most people who live in large cities, your surroundings are a wave of constant busyness. Or was it simply a sense of helplessness and confusion mixed with shock? Whatever the reason (which even now, I honestly don't know) I acted like all the sheep in front of me and kept moving, occasionally glancing in the rearview mirror to see if some conscience-relieving miracle had taken place and suddenly he would jump up and walk away. Surely someone had already called 911, if not multiple times, so having me adding to their burden wouldn't help. What if I had pulled over, then what? Check for a heartbeat, place in the recovery position, or just cover him up with lower extremities on view to passersby?

I was shaking when I turned up to photograph the corporate event. Uncertain of what to do, my hazy state of mind was broken by a phone call from my wife. She had gone to visit my mother and described how she was shocked by her deterioration, and how her ability to talk had changed. But the doctors had ruled out a stroke. I told her what I had witnessed and she tried to reassure me that there would have been nothing I could have done. I somehow managed to work that evening, checking my phone for any updates for a dead man on the highway.

Later on, I found out the driver of the limo containing a bride, groom and wedding party en route to their reception, had hit and killed the man who had been walking across the highway. The couple were forced to remain at the scene for hours, probably missing most of their wedding reception. And even if they could salvage the evening, how could the conversation be anything other than the tragedy of the previous hours? It seemed unlikely anyone in the limo would be in the mood to dance or have more photographs taken now. I wondered how a newlywed couple could move forward from such an event. How would a wedding anniversary ever be the same again? Was this unfortunate couple destined to separate, blaming every piece of misfortune they would face in their life on that one incident? And what is the correct thing to do? I wondered if they planned to send flowers to the funeral or speak at some point to the next of kin, unless the police or a lawyer would advise against it.

Unable to sleep that night, I went over the incident again and again. Every time trying to justify my reasons for not stopping, but all the time imagining what may have taken place inside the limo. There would have been laughter and an atmosphere of excitement halted in an instant by screams and exclamations of disbelief. Cellphones in unsteady hands calling for help. The chauffeur exiting the car, to do what, I could only guess. Did the limo move over to the hard shoulder first and then someone walk over to check on the body? Or did the vehicle stop with the body bouncing off the hood and coming to rest headfirst in the road, this being the main cause of death and the resulting puddle of blood? Maybe someone at the scene had first aid training or was a medical provider. Could it be possible that the bride was a doctor or a nurse, trying to save his life whilst wearing her white wedding dress now stained red with his blood? So many outrageous permutations, all of them fuelled by lack of sleep, and likely none of them 100 percent correct. Then the other question to dwell on: what was this person doing crossing the road? Had he made it across half the highway only to be brought down close to the finish; or had his short cut been stopped almost as soon as it started?

The next morning, I read the reports online of the accident. His name was Dr. Jonathan Syms, age 38. There seemed to be no explanation as to why he was walking across the highway. He had no car nearby, and there was a pedestrian walkway running beneath the road not too far away. Why would a clearly educated man cut across a busy highway and affect so many people with his actions? I wondered if this was suicide. He had worked at the Toronto Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. I could only imagine how stressful this would have been.

I later found an obituary saying it was a tragic accident. This didn't make sense, but was it really any of my business? Or had he made it my business by forcing me to witness the end of his life? There was no mention of a partner, only family members and how he was survived by both parents and two sisters. Someone had tried to sum up his life in a few paragraphs. "Jonathan was known as the 'go-to' guy when answers were needed quickly…. Outside of medicine, he actually enjoyed working out at the gym, took tai chi from a Shaolin monk—which he thought was pretty cool… Jon was the best of us… Osler's Aequanimitas personified."

William Osler was a Canadian doctor from the 1800s who created the residency program for specialty training of physicians. He has been described as "The father of modern medicine". Aequanimitas refers to his 1889 farewell address from the University of Pennsylvania in which he calls for "calmness amid storm, clearness of judgment in moments of grave peril," and "no eventuality can disturb the mental equilibrium of the physician." Had Jonathan's mental equilibrium been somehow disturbed?

How awful it must be to bury your child, trying to convince yourself that these were not the actions of a suicidal man, and there were no signs missed. No change in his voice the last time you spoke to him by phone; but could you ever be sure? Blame would of course have to be apportioned, if for no other reason than as part of the grieving process. There was a small photograph of Jonathan, and I instantly recognised the bright blond hair. This time I saw his face smiling back at me. He looked young and happy, and I was struggling to see this being the same person who would attempt to cross six lanes of fast-moving traffic. The obituary spoke about how helpful he was and how he enjoyed life to the fullest and supported World Vision among other charitable causes. Clearly he was a decent human being, but this only served to make me feel worse. Finally, there was a quote: "What the caterpillar calls the end of life, the master calls the butterfly".

I was astounded that he was a medical doctor. Years of studying, exams, constantly being in the top percentile of your class. The student loans, the long hours and the people he could have helped, perhaps even my mother. Then all the thoughts in my head ceased at once, and I felt cold. He was a doctor. If it had been me or anyone else lying on the road, he would have stopped. Jonathan would not have questioned it. He would have pulled his car over and gone to work regardless of where he was going. He was clearly a better man than me. And if he had arrived early enough at the scene, maybe a life could have been saved.

When I saw my mum the next morning, I had brought her a plant and a card for Mother's Day. She was clearly worse, and when she spoke it was hard to understand her, but she smiled when I showed off the plant. I kissed her and wished her a happy Mother's Day. She was not the same woman who only a few months ago had travelled to Mexico to see me get married. The woman there was smiling and laughing. She looked youthful for her age. It was not uncommon for her to be mistaken for someone 20 years younger, always dressed impeccably with just a hint of glamour. Later, I would replay videos taken that week from alongside the hotel pool, over and over again looking for symptoms of failing health, clues that I had missed, but only seeing a woman relieved her son was finally getting married. My father once told me how it concerned my mother that I wasn't married. She wanted to see me settled with someone to share my life with just as she had spent nearly 60 years with my father.

The following day, I had decided to convince my sister to fly over from England as I felt she might not get another chance to see her mother again. To show her how ill she was, I made a short video of her trying to talk. I played it back before sending it, hoping the upsetting images would shock her into coming. I'm unsure if I've ever played it back since. Later, my sister told me how she had erased what I had sent, not wishing to be reminded. I find myself still unable to do that, rather leaving it on various electronic devices for fear of losing it.

My father had been by her bedside all night and was exhausted. I persuaded him to go home, and took my turn to keep watch, whilst holding her hand. The Mother's Day card from the previous day remained sealed in its envelope on the side table, glaring back at me with only the handwritten word "Mum" stopping the nursing staff from disposing of it. Was the last written gesture she would ever receive from me to be an unopened Mother's Day card? It seemed unnecessarily cruel, as if I had been offered a sign of what was approaching. At that moment I began to resign myself to what was inevitably about to occur. Over the next few hours she slept, every now and then crying out the occasional word. It's surprising how lonely a hospital can feel, even with people in adjoining beds and visitors talking and making a fuss over their loved ones.

Mentally I was below par, "trying to be strong," as my aunt later advised me when my mother cried out, "Mum…. I want my mum". I know without a doubt that hearing those words will never leave me no matter how old I get. I've heard stories of soldiers, mortally wounded in battle that cry out for their mothers as their ultimate dying wish. Maybe the one place everyone wishes to return to at the end is the embrace of the one who brought them into the world and would protect them from anything. At that point I broke down, unable to control my emotions anymore, caught somewhere between the chaos of comforting my mother and fighting back tears.

I think it's normal to wonder about the demise of a parent. How it will happen, when it will occur? Maybe it's a way of preparing oneself, ensuring that when the moment arrives you are ready, and all that's left is to figure out what comes next.

I had made it forty-eight years, one month, two weeks and five days.

When I was nine years old, I had a school friend whose mother had died during the summer holidays. The teacher had explained to the class that when Paul returned to school he would be upset, and if we were to see him cry, we should all be kind and try and put ourselves in his position. The first day Paul returned back to class, the teacher asked him if he was okay. Paul wasn't okay, and sobbed uncontrollably, his face turning red and unable to talk, standing in the middle of the classroom in his gray trousers and bottle-green pullover while Mrs. Ritchie held on to him, softly stroking his hair. Paul, Mrs. Ritchie and the class were trapped in a moment of unifying grief. I had tried hard to put myself in his position, but I couldn't. As much as I wanted to I found it impossible, because I never wanted that to be me. In the early hours of the morning during the month of May, I finally knew how my childhood friend Paul felt on his first day back at school. With my father on one side of the bed and myself on the other, there was little to say. We had already left the other alone to say their goodbyes. Neither of us enquired what the other had said. That was because it was only ever meant for one person to hopefully hear.

No more coffee could be drunk or hospital snacks consumed. Occasionally a nurse would appear to see if we required anything. She would check the readings of my mother's vital signs. "Soon. It's going to be soon," she would say. All the other patients' visitors had long gone home. The "must leave by 8 o'clock" sign didn't apply to my father and I, and we had a special pass for the evening. And so we stared at the machine that monitored her heartbeat. Slowly the numbers became less. Once in a while the number would become a higher value, but then drop lower than it previously was. Our little conversation revolved around the red LED numbers that were counting down to something new, something that would no longer contain the cement that once so securely held things in position.

I had promised myself on the final drive to the hospital that no matter whatever happened I wouldn't cry, if for no other reason than my father's sake. I came close a few times but kept that promise. I wondered if my father had made a similar one. Maybe this said more about my upbringing than I cared to admit, but it never seemed disrespectful and it was never meant as a measure of my love for my mother. We sat calmly, each holding her hand until a long single tone registered on the monitor. This was the nurse's cue to arrive and turn everything off.

What should now happen—people to be informed, the inevitable words of condolence and sad faces? That was for later. Now all that was demanded of me was to stand up, walk away, and take a last look back.

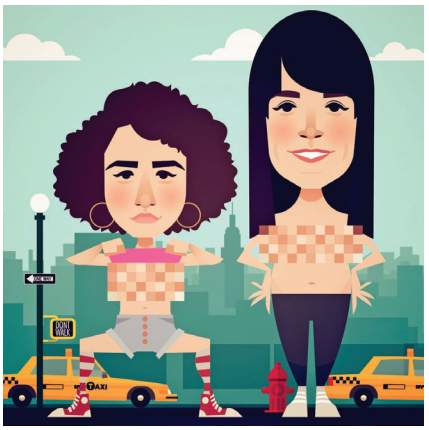
Somehow we found ourselves in a private side room discussing with a doctor what normally happens next. Forms to be signed, personal items to be collected. More than 15 minutes must have passed

when it occurred to me that I never recalled saying a final goodbye as we left.

So I returned, this time on my own. The light was subdued, the nurse had arranged the bedding and removed now-unwanted items. I half expect my mother's head to be covered with a blanket, but instead it had been brought up close under her chin as if there was to be a cold evening ahead. As I stood there, I realised that everything that needed to be said hadn't been said within the walls of the hospital. Words had been repeated on birthdays and countless other family events, and sometimes just for the sake of saying them on long hot summer days by the beach or on the lengthy tedious drives to see my grandparents. They had been written down and sealed in cards and attached to gifts, all done so many times that it was irrelevant if the contents of one was never read because she always knew how I truly felt. This time I left and never returned. We left the hospital, for the last time, with only her personal effects stowed in a couple of bags.

Later that day, I found myself driving along the 427 towards the airport, past the spot where I had encountered Jonathan. There was no trace of him this time, no shoe or discarded paper blocking my path. I thought about the bride and groom and wondered how they were coping. Had they unwrapped their gifts or gone away on honeymoon? Had they made a pact never to mention the incident to newly-acquired friends when questions of their wedding arose? And then my thoughts turned to another couple: my sister and her husband whom I was going to pick up from the airport. They were unaware that my mother died while they were flying here to see her.

As I waited at the arrival lounge for them to clear customs, I thought of what was best to say and what needed to be said. It turns out there are moments when you really don't need words. A certain look or uneasy body language can give the game away. Then you find yourself surrounded by happy people dragging luggage away to five-star hotels or a friend's home, while you embrace your only sibling, just as Mrs. Ritchie had held my friend Paul so many years earlier.



Broad City illustration by Stanley Chow, in Emily Nussbaum's "Laverne and Curly: The Slapstick Anarchists of Broad City," in New York Magazine March 7, 2016.

Sex and the City illustration by Andy Friedman, in Emily Nussbaum's "Difficult Women," in New York Magazine July 29, 2013

Girls illustration by Michael Caron, in Emily Nussbaum's "Hannah Barbaric: "Girls," "Enlightened," and the comedy of cruelty," in New York Magazine February 11 and 18, 2013

The City Girls: Abbi, Ilana, Hannah, Marnie, Jessa, Shoshannah, Carrie, Samantha, Miranda, Charlotte and me.

by Haley Wiseman

There is no other way of putting it, as much as I hate the sound of it, I have always been a "city girl." I was born in Montreal and continued to live there until I moved to Toronto in my twenties. I have gone camping and I have travelled a whole continent carry-on only. What I mean to say is, growing up and living in a city hasn't made me shallow or spoiled. My ideal standard of living doesn't necessarily involve fancy restaurants or designer brands - no. City life has pushed me to stand on my own two feet in a competitive world where I should try to meet the unrealistic goals I've set for myself. The city's fast pace had me fantasizing early on of a final destination, a dream world I would eventually live in as a screenwriter in New York with my funny (but not funnier than me) husband, and our four sons. Occasionally, we'd travel back to Canada and Los Angeles, where my million-dollar scripts are produced. Having lived in cities where the opportunities are plenty and many have come to do what they love, this isn't considered wishful thinking, and these goals have guided the route of my life in one way or another.

And I'm not alone—I watch fictional characters from my favorite television shows follow narratives similar to mine, characters who put themselves first, who are also beginning to learn how to adjust others into their lives in the ways they want.

It's a theme that groups many shows together between genres. *Broad City* is released on Comedy Central, a network focused on providing funny, unique stories. It's an entirely different planet from HBO, which is responsible for *Girls*. While both shows are about 20-something white women living in New York City, the two differ in their characters and tone. *Broad City* is a comedy following the adventures of Abbi and Ilana, a pair of best friends driven by their developing egos. While *Girls* falls under the vague "comedy-drama" genre, it uses comedy underneath Hannah, Marnie, Jessa and Shoshannah's struggles

with each other, their families, and significant others. In their own rights, both programs successfully show what it means to be a woman in your twenties living in a city. Their differences lie in genre and network, but more importantly, the shows tell separate and distinct stories.

The growing popularity of TV shows with realistic and independent female characters cannot be mentioned without acknowledging HBO's *Sex And The City*, running from 1998 until 2004. Ahead of its time, *Sex And The City* revolved around Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte, four single women in their thirties living in New York City. While these characters are older than Abbi, Ilana, Hannah, Marnie, Jessa and Shoshanna, the show reveals itself to be a coming-of-age narrative as the women ultimately become aware of exactly who they are. After all, although with your twenties comes better self-understanding, the cityscape is always changing, naturally impacting the people who live in it.

Premiering two years ago, a friend recommended *Broad City* to me saying, "you remind me of Ilana." A few episodes in, I knew what he meant, also realizing that the show just *got it*. It really understands the nature of certain female friendships at this age. The way Abbi and Ilana treat each other, themselves and others is true to life. The two are at times obnoxious, loud, and ignorant—qualities usually reserved for male television characters. "You know what's cool about this party? We're the sexiest girls here, because we have like the fattest asses, you know? We're the most fuckable," Ilana tells Abbi as they walk into a party to which they probably invited themselves. The competition of a city can make some women insecure, but for Abbi, Ilana and I, it forces us to stop comparing ourselves to others.

Such confidence dovetails with another realistic characterization, Abbi and Ilana's concern for one another rather than men. The two are selfish in their incessant search for enjoyment, making it a positive egocentricity, because they remain good friends to each other nonetheless. They take almost nothing seriously and they rely on each other, letting each do what they want without the drama that comes with being in a serious, romantic relationship. While Abbi goes on dates throughout the three seasons, Ilana outwardly rejects monogamy, sleeping with many partners and calling her ongoing casual relationship with Lincoln, "purely physical." Even in the third season when Lincoln chooses to end the relationship for something more serious, Ilana's ideals don't change as she lets him go. Ilana is her own person looking for intimacy in the way she wants, and those standards won't change because she fears loneliness since she still has her best friend. Ilana crying over the break-up to Abbi is the only indication of her vulnerability, soon forgotten by sitting in a bathtub together smoking weed. Each episode ends this way, with the two together or talking over video chat. Though resolution is inherent to sitcom structure, this shows that Abbi and Ilana will always be there for each other no matter what they get themselves into.

While I live on my own far from my parents, I've learnt to accept friends as family. There's security in the unconditional love waiting at home, and that safety is needed to continue moving forward. The way Abbi and Ilana put each other before others reflects the importance of friendship in a city, where connection feels impossible amongst millions of people. Cherishing these friends and depending on them is crucial when in your twenties; dating is hard. The person you're seeing could be "the one," or they may easily not be because you're changing and so are they. Not only that, but populated cities bring the opportunity of meeting someone else every day. One of the running jokes in *Broad City* is Ilana persistently hitting on Abbi, and though it's not taken seriously, the joke shows that Ilana appreciates her as more than a friend. And they both hold the place of a boyfriend in each other's lives, since most of us need to find that emotional support somewhere.

Committing to someone is uncertain when your life can change any day, and it's risky to rely on one person to tolerate, accept, and love who you are and will become. It's easier to just avoid it all together while you can; emotionally investing in friendship instead, as I do for the most part. It gives me some self-assurance to be single and be in relationships that will probably leave me heartbroken. At least I know that pain can subside with the company of friends, the same way *Broad City* is Abbi and Ilana celebrating themselves and each other.

Friendships and relationships should be easy, and I consider myself lucky to appreciate that lesson which many take long to learn. It's difficult to let go of a person just because you mostly disagree. It takes time for fighting and distress to outweigh the good memories, trust and dependence you've

grown to share. Abbi and Ilana's friendship works because they have an open dialogue, and when it was surprisingly broken once in thirty episodes, it was quickly resolved through the honesty that made their bond strong in the first place. The show lacks dramatic conflict because it's a comedy, but above all because the story of Abbi and Ilana's friendship doesn't involve this tension.

It's understandable then why *Broad City* isn't taken seriously, as many consider its counterpart to be *Girls*. *Girls* became wildly popular for finally putting on TV realistic stories about the experience of graduating college and becoming an adult, a weird post-adolescent phase most people go through but no one seemed to address. Being the same age and with similar background to Abbi and Ilana, the four main characters are also self-absorbed. The honesty in their representations is honourable, it's what makes the girls unlikeable and is also why many can't stand to watch the series. I think the distaste for *Girls* that came with its success grew from viewers empathizing with what they saw on screen. The four are learning to live on their own, and without any significant financial or moral support from their families, their choices are justified by the fact that they do have to think for themselves. They're bound to continuously hurt each other, the people around them and consequently themselves as they try to balance their own priorities with those of the friends who are supposed to be there for them. *Girls* illustrates your twenties as a pivotal time in your life when you're expected to be an adult, even though you're just growing up.

Hannah, Marnie, Jessa and Shoshannah fight to fit friendships and relationships into their lives without having to change themselves. They each do all they can to escape confronting who they are. In the first few seasons, Hannah longs to be a writer and is in an unpredictable relationship with Adam, the guy she sleeps with and eventually rightfully considers a boyfriend. After Marnie and her boyfriend Charlie read Hannah's brutal diary entry explaining why Marnie should break up with him, instead of apologizing, she asks, "If you had read the essay and it wasn't about you, do you think you would've liked it? Just like as a piece of writing." When trying to get her life together on her own, Hannah ruins the relationships meant to keep her afloat. Her actions leave her alone when she loses Marnie and Adam, as she excludes her other friends who have set her aside anyway. At this point in the series, all she has is her publishing deal for an e-book. It's terrifying to fully acknowledge that you are the sole person responsible for your future, and Hannah battles with this and relapses into O.C.D.

I grew up with my family always being around and then I moved to a city to continuously surround myself with friends, letting me ignore the fact that loneliness is inevitable. And to avoid it, I've tried to control every situation by assuming the outcome, while Hannah tries to control the people in her life by being stubborn and assuming they'll follow suite. Living in a city makes me live in the future instead of being fully in the present, so I sometimes stumble over myself when I try to slow down. Regardless of the confidence in my friendships, I am still learning how to be absolutely sure of myself on my own, knowing I will have to overcome this as I plan to live in places conditioned by people always coming and going. I'm trying to adjust, and for a while, Hannah doesn't. When she is finally given the opportunity to alter her life by herself, she can't because it challenges her to face her demons. New York City and Toronto are overwhelming, and if you want to find your place in it you have to know yourself first.

The three other characters also battle with themselves, at the beginning Marnie

seems the most secure with her beauty, her stable job and committed relationship. But as the series evolves in its six seasons, it becomes clear that Marnie is running away from herself too. She looks for approval from men and in relationships, rather than herself. In contrast, Shoshannah puts too much focus on herself by trying to be the person she thinks she should be instead of understanding who she truly is. And there's Jessa, a recovering drug addict who is always doing the craziest things to proclaim herself as a free spirit. She's so concerned with gathering life experiences and stories that she doesn't need to pay attention to her damaged self. The four are insecure, and when it comes to approaching themselves and realizing they must change, they avoid it in different ways. This isn't healthy no matter where you live, but in a city where you don't feel as trapped in one job or relationship, you're either able to continue avoiding who you are and what you want *or* you can deal with it and grow.

Both shows prove how friendships are needed for survival in a city, and maintaining these relationships is only possible if you are willing to improve yourself. *Broad City* is an example of a secure friendship, and *Girls* is the story of how to accept yourself to then let others in. Without knowing who you are, you can't grow and connect with others since you don't know exactly what you need. But without any outside support, you can't build any trust in yourself to mature. The dynamics of how you relate to yourself and the people around you is different. How can you definitively figure yourself out when the place and people around you are in a constant motion – it's exhausting. I strive to meet my ambitions independently but I can't neglect any sort of relationships that may alter the ways I get there. I also can't overlook how these relationships could run deep enough to shift what I've wanted all along. It's about knowing and welcoming the change others can bring, and also having a great sense of self.

To fully have the courage of your own convictions comes with time and experiences I have yet to go through, and it's a part of adolescence I'm now becoming familiar with. Seeing parts of myself in *Broad City* and *Girls* lets me reflect on what's happening in my life and how I can address it, but it was *Sex And The City* that explained to me that it's okay to be single if that means not settling. I watched the show from an age too young to empathize with what I saw on screen, but they were the first women I had encountered to be "old" and unmarried. Carrie as a columnist, Samantha as a public relations agent, Miranda as lawyer and Charlotte as an art gallery assistant all supported themselves and enjoyed doing so. Being in their thirties, they each knew themselves and it was a matter of finally meeting a man who was compatible. It takes time time, but in the end, they do.

Even though Carrie and Charlotte were more obviously concerned with finding "the one," Samantha and Miranda were too as the four navigated through the city date by date, relationship by relationship. I look to the way they find men who agree with their ways of being alone the same way I look to being my own person first and then meeting someone who appreciates that. A popular criticism of the show is Carrie getting back together with her ex Big again and again even though she ends up hurt every time. It's her tragic flaw, but with each return she has clearly changed. After hearing he's marrying someone else she tells herself, "Maybe I didn't break Big, maybe the problem was he couldn't break me. Maybe some women aren't meant to be tamed, maybe they need to run free, until they find someone just as wild to run with." And that is what Carrie did, she continued to be herself and evolve past men who couldn't handle her, until Big changed his ways for her. Every time they break up it's because she won't compromise her needs, not because she's weak and can't resist. Making risky decisions takes trusting yourself and your choices, which also comes with time. Again, it's a balancing act between thinking logically and being open to the chance of being hurt. If things never went wrong, I would continue to understand the world in one way. Carrie's repeated heartbreak taught me to not remember people for the ways they hurt you, but for how they made you better for those deserving of you.

For Charlotte, Samantha and Miranda, their endings are also unexpected. Their lives end up in ways contradicting their initial ideals, and it's realistic as we see how each relationship shapes them. This show and its characters growth wouldn't be possible in a small town moving at a slow pace—the women know themselves because they have to. In a city where there are so many people, there is no point in sulking but instead confronting your feelings and moving on. This is a quality I admire and know I will grow into, otherwise there is no way I will do the things I've been dreaming of all along.

Sex And The City shows me that if I want to live in a city, I will never stop growing and life won't immediately settle down once I feel older and wiser. Just because I will eventually gain a genuine understanding of who I am and what I want, doesn't mean everything will fall into place. "The most exciting, challenging and significant relationship of all is the one you have with yourself. And if you find someone to love the you that you love, well, that's just fabulous." The four understand that you are the one in charge of your fate, its what the characters in *Girls* learn to recognize and is only possible with friendships similar to those in *Broad City*. The show pointed out the difficulties and necessities of having friends even when you're in a serious relationship or marriage—revealing that life is never perfect even when you have someone by your side.

The busy, successful life I had always fantasized about is possible, but not without fights between those around me and above all, with myself. *Sex And The City* is important to me as it was to so many women for showing that all you need is love from your friends and yourself to get through anything. You have to look for meaning within, and then the people who really love you will encourage that. A lot of people call me ridiculous for thinking I can have any future as a screenwriter, but I ignore them and listen to my friends cheering me on instead.

As a writer, I watch these shows understanding these characters as real people. Each of these women are driven by something—they're my on-screen heroes, and they cheer me on.

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