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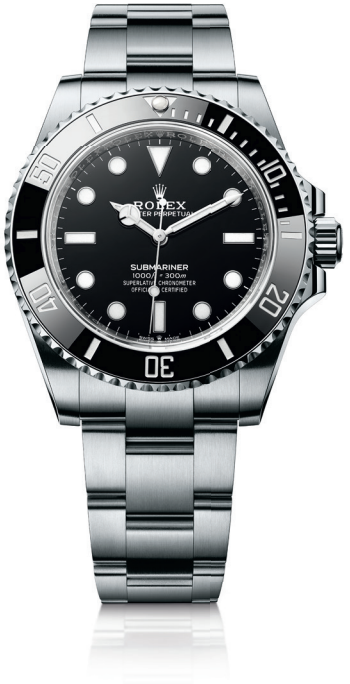

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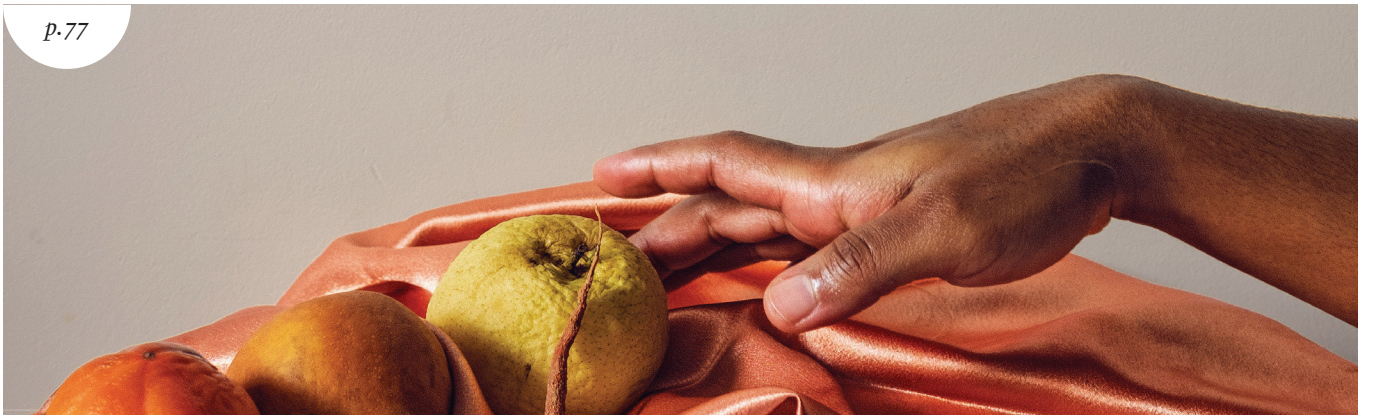
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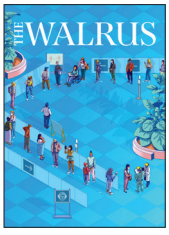
DEPARTMENTS

ESSAYS



ON THE COVER
Illustration by Glenn Harvey

Glenn Harvey is a Toronto-based illustrator. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, ESPN, and *Wired*.

FEATURES

THE ARTS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM UKOH

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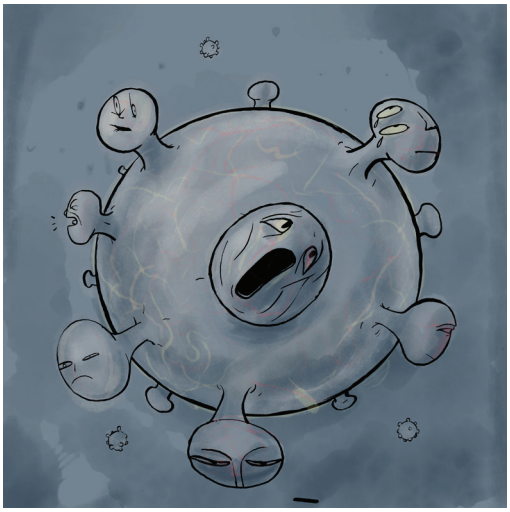
Editor's Letter



Pop psychology has lent us a framework for processing the seemingly unfathomable, from a bad breakup to the death of a loved one: the seven stages of grief. Although the precise system of categorization, adapted from psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*, has evolved since she identified denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance in seriously ill patients—grieving is more complicated than it looks—it's tempting to project, after living through more than half a year of COVID-19, what the seven stages of the pandemic might be. Gone is the novelty of the early weeks (think: total lockdown, nightly cheering for front line workers), and so too is our wary optimism as restrictions around travel and entertainment started to lift. Even as many of us have grown accustomed to working from home, with unpredictable child care arrangements and chairs that hurt our backs, we're hitting a wall—an uneasy new normal with no end in sight. We're beyond shock and denial, so to speak (even if the latter still occupies a fair bit of the public psyche in the form of mask rejection and preventable karaoke-bar outbreaks). For many of us, this is the time to confront the magnitude of what's changed around us.

Here at The Walrus, a number of the stories we're working on have come to touch on a theme of loss. In some sense, that's not surprising—the pandemic has disrupted everything from the economy to our relationships with friends and family. But the pervasiveness of the tone is notable, even with stories that have no direct relationship to the pandemic or that were planned before it began. As our editors decided what to include in this issue, we openly discussed whether to fight the trend or let it stand. Mortality might seem like an unusual topic for a general-interest magazine that usually seeks to balance a range of subject matter and a tone that travels between serious and light. On the other hand, we are collectively experiencing a global health crisis that has claimed more than 900,000 lives as of this writing. Maybe these are times to call things what they are.

This month's cover story continues our focus on the practical aspects of responding to the virus. In "How to Vaccinate 38 Million People," Danielle Groen explains the complications of producing a vaccine against COVID-19—our biggest hope for ending the pandemic. As Groen explores the demands of conducting clinical trials and sourcing components—along with the politics of distributing the vaccine—she demonstrates that the solution isn't going to be easy or immediate; even after a vaccine is successfully developed, we might be living in this "new normal" for a while.

Not every COVID-19 story is a tragedy. Unable to visit her mother in a retirement home at the start of the pandemic, author and illustrator Cinders McLeod decided to celebrate a powerful and inspiring experience in her mother's past. The resulting visual essay, "My Mum and Mister Rogers," offers an unexpected glimpse into the beloved children's television icon's off-camera life; it's also a testament to what can be achieved if we dream beyond our current circumstances. Melissa Gismondi's essay "Forever Homesick," commissioned before the pandemic, recounts the history of homesickness. It should have direct resonance for anyone unable to travel or displaced because of COVID-19 lockdowns; it also speaks to the grief many of us feel over the loss of the lives we thought we were going to lead. If we used to plan for the future through tangible goals, such as education, vacations, and career ambitions, perhaps "success" now just means getting by.

The humbling aspects of the pandemic—and the crises it has exposed—seem to call on many of us to reevaluate old decisions with new eyes. Curtis Gillespie's profile of David Frum, who moved to Washington, DC, in 1996 and became a Republican insider, explores the expat's regret over what America's conservative movement has become ahead of the US election this November. In "David Frum Fights the Right," we see Frum reexamine his past from a critical distance and lay out his philosophy for the future. Domenica Martinello touches on a similar theme in her poem "It Follows," which invokes the stories of Lot and Orpheus: "I refuse to be useful only / in the rearview of my strife." It has been clear since the beginning of the pandemic that a crisis exposes what needs to change. In doing so, it reveals what we can leave behind.

—Jessica Johnson

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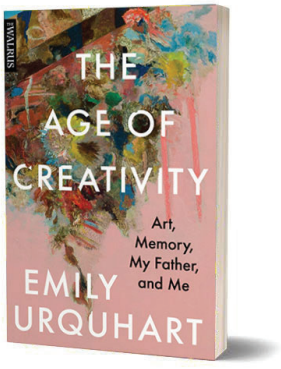

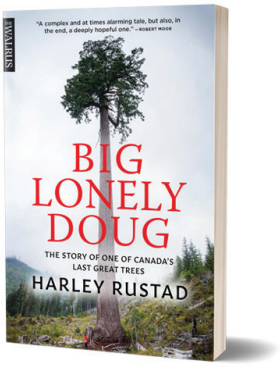

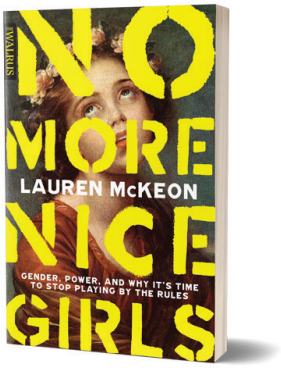

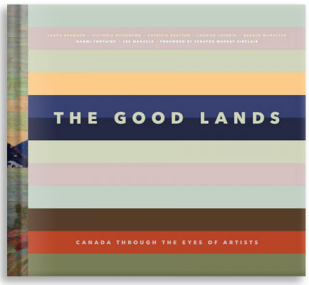

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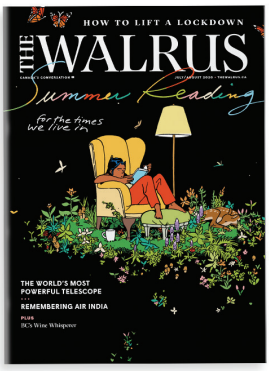

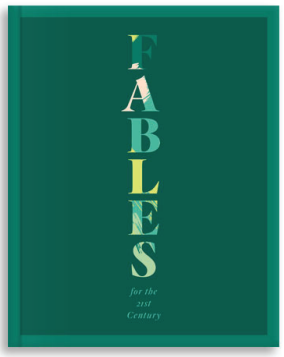

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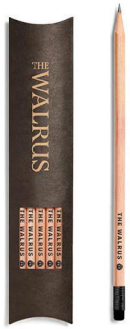

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CANADA'S CONVERSATION

Contributors' Notes

MATTHEW REMSKI
"The Wrong Side of the New Age," p. 60

"I'm a two-time cult survivor, and one of the organizations I was involved in was similar to Shambhala International, the organization I cover in this feature. I am familiar with not only the religious aspect of the group but also the cultic dynamics that Shambhala Buddhism shares with a number of organizations that have histories of institutional abuse. I understand, in a sympathetic way as well as in a critical way, what it means to be recruited into such a group. What I really had to learn about for this story was how deeply embedded a group's culture can become within a social and familial matrix."

Matthew Remski is a yoga teacher, trainer, and consultant living in Toronto. He writes about adverse experiences in yoga culture at matthewremski.com *and co-hosts the podcast* Conspirituality.

DOMENICA MARTINELLO
"It Follows," p. 58

"After I finished my first book of poems, I felt so much pressure when staring at a blank page: 'What's next? What are you going to write today?' So I gave myself the project of writing a six-line poem every day. Over the course of a week, maybe six of the poems would turn out not great, but one would shine and come out fully formed in those six lines. 'It Follows' was one of those poems."

Domenica Martinello lives in Montreal. Her first book, All Day I Dream about Sirens, *was published by Coach House Books in 2019.*

PACINTHE MATTAR
"Canadian Media's Racism Problem," p. 36

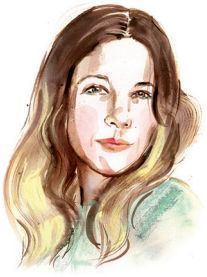
"I would like to see Canadian media be at the forefront of taking on issues of race and racism. And I would love a world in which racialized journalists can work on the stories that bring them joy. My dream assignment would be to profile Rihanna's humanitarian work. She's a star and an entrepreneur, but she's also a big philanthropist. That's what I would love to be writing about instead of writing about racism."

Pacinthe Mattar is a writer and producer in Toronto. Her work has appeared in BuzzFeed, Deutsche Welle, Reader's Digest Canada, *and* Toronto Life.

CINDERS MCLEOD
"My Mum and Mister Rogers," p. 72

"When we were kids, my mum would keep us busy by writing a story and then having us draw the pictures. She wrote many children's books, but they were never published. One of the things I loved about telling the story of her connection with Mister Rogers is that her work is now being recognized. She never felt confident, which breaks my heart because she has more creativity dripping from her fingers than many famous people."

Cinders McLeod has had her writing and illustrations published in the Guardian *and the* Globe and Mail *and featured on CBC TV. She recently released* Give It!, *the fourth book in a series on financial literacy for children.*



MELINDA JOSIE
Illustration for "Consider the Beaver," p. 85

"I grew up essentially out in the woods, in Muskoka, Ontario. Doing this illustration about *Hinterland Who's Who*, the minute-long television docs about Canadian wildlife, brought me back home, to sitting on our carpeted living room floor watching cartoons. I loved the spot about muskoxen and how the animals back into a circle to protect their herd from predators. There's just something about that."

Melinda Josie is a Toronto-based artist and illustrator. Her clients include The New York Times Magazine, The Atlantic, *and* Condé Nast Traveler.

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FROM AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR
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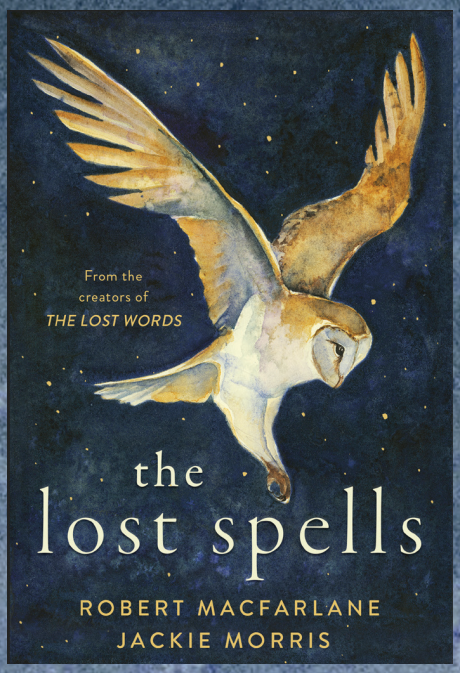
the lost spells



Coming this October from the creators of *The Lost Words*, a beautiful and evocative new spellbook that will enchant you and summon the natural world with its poems and magical watercolours.

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Letters

THE END OF THE LYME

Thanks to Stephanie Nolen for diving into the world of ticks and Lyme disease ("Tick Tock," September/October). The writer's comment that "a small subset of those infected report a 'chronic' infection, although most scientists reject the idea that this could occur" is worthy of discussion. Chronic Lyme may or may not exist, but you can certainly feel unwell long after a tick bite. My bite was two years ago, and I still have not fully recovered despite spending thousands on private care and medications. For further proof, visit any Lyme support group or check in with Shania Twain, Avril Lavigne, or Justin Bieber. Meanwhile, keep tucking your pants into your socks.

Jane Litchfield
Thornbury, ON

MEMORY SERVES

I was glad to read Jordan Michael Smith's story on Chandrima Chakraborty's efforts to archive and memorialize the Air India bombing ("Forgotten Disaster," July/August). I remember starting grade four, the fall after the attack happened, and wondering why my neighbours Thejus and Jyothi were not running to class in the morning as usual. I later learned they had been on that flight. Jyothi was a humanitarian, always looking out for those in need. She wrote poetry. These people were our friends, our neighbours, our family, and it's so important that Chakraborty is keeping their histories alive in our national memory.

Jennifer Lee
Toronto, ON

BALANCING THE BOOKS

Tajja Isen's exploration of the role of sensitivity readers in book publishing ("Sense and Sensitivity," July/August) is fascinating, but it omits part of the bigger picture. The Big Five publishers' business models are built on releasing a few major titles a year, and they cannot afford to take risks when so much of their revenue depends on so few works. Their use of sensitivity readers seems less altruistic and more about producing sanitized books that are unlikely to offend. This is not true diversity, and as Isen points out, publishers should instead prioritize new and diverse authors—a first step in rectifying the homogeneity of the work we read.

Nathaniel Nichol
Seattle, WA

READER BEWARE

In "How COVID-19 Infected the Publishing Industry" (*thewalrus.ca*), Stephen Henighan provides a valuable overview of Canadian bookselling's extremely precarious economic position. Although his article is occasioned by COVID-19, Henighan is right to situate the roots of our current situation in the turn-of-the-century consolidation of Canadian brands, like McClelland & Stewart, under foreign corporations, like German-owned Penguin Random House—all while these companies maintained the fiction of being Canadian publishers and continued collecting Canadian taxpayer subsidies. Meanwhile, independent bookstores, which are critically important to our national literature, have languished. While some might view his article as alarmist, Henighan has, if anything, understated the threat posed to Canadian society.

Rolf Mauer
Vancouver, BC

MISSED CONNECTION

Sometimes you don't realize you're in love until it's too late. Russell Smith's *Globe and Mail* arts-and-culture column, the demise of which the columnist himself so incisively analyzed ("Not Recommended," September/October), is one such case. I was no regular or even benevolent reader, and I often had more criticism than praise, but I enjoyed reading Smith because he wrote on things I cared about. I remember a great column on English usage in Canada, which, as a sociolinguist, I relished critiquing. I wish I'd written in, as I'm doing now that it's too late, encouraging Smith in his important work. He's a linguist's kindred spirit, but I just couldn't see it.

Stefan Dollinger
Vancouver, BC

TUSK, TUSK

In the May issue, the article "Summer Service" stated that the Canadian Martyrs' Shrine was on the Canadian Shield. In fact, the shrine is just outside the Canadian Shield region. The Walrus regrets the error.

"The time has come," The Walrus said, "to talk of many things." Send us a letter, email (letters@thewalrus.ca), or tweet, or post on our Facebook page. Comments may be published in any medium and edited for length, clarity, and accuracy.

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HEALTH

We're Failing Our Kids' Mental Health

Social media pressures, loneliness, and the climate crisis are weighing on today's youth. The stress is taking its toll

BY LAUREN MCGILL
ILLUSTRATION BY MATHIAS BALL

THE PARAMEDICS radioed in the details to the rural Ontario hospital: female teenager, intentional overdose, ETA five minutes. The patient's mother arrived with her, wearing a look I had grown all too familiar with—bewilderment, incredulity, fear. When I'd taken the job as an emergency-department clerk, I'd steeled myself for blood and guts, for car accidents and broken bones. But I wasn't prepared for the sheer number of cases like this one.

After the girl was out of medical danger, the emergency physician asked me to contact the attending psychiatrist, who would speak with the girl and try to find out what had triggered her suicide attempt. Beyond this consultation, however, the patient and her family would be largely on their own, left to navigate a fragmented system that has allowed too many young people to fall through the cracks.

Last June, researchers from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, the University of Ottawa, and McGill University released a study about emergency-department visits by Ontario adolescents between 2003 and 2017. Beginning in 2009, the number of adolescents presenting for self-harm increased sharply, more than doubling between then and 2017. Visits for mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation, rose 78 percent over the same eight-year period. Mental health professionals report children as young as seven or eight expressing a desire to take their own lives.

Across the country, the situation is similarly dire. In BC, almost one in five of the province's students reported having seriously considered suicide in the past year, according to a survey by the youth-health nonprofit McCreary Centre Society. And, according to Judy Darcy, BC's minister of mental health and addictions, Indigenous youth in the province are dying of suicide at a rate four to five times higher than their non-Indigenous peers.

Dina Kulik, a Toronto pediatrician, experiences the youth mental health crisis first-hand during every emergency-department shift she works. Her caseload regularly includes children whose parents have just discovered fresh cuts on their arms, young people escorted by police after sending suicidal texts and barricading their bedrooms, or unconscious teens wheeled in by ambulance crews after intentionally overdosing on prescription medication.

When she isn't working in the emergency department, Kulik runs a primary-care and consulting practice at Kidcrew, a multispecialty pediatric clinic, where she discovers still more young people wrestling with suicidal thoughts. Each visit, patients are given a questionnaire that looks at many different aspects of their lives, including mental health, bullying, and overall safety. "It's eye-opening," says Kulik of the survey results. "The vast majority of the parents bringing these kids have no idea their kid is struggling. They never heard the child complain."

There are many other young people struggling with suicidality who do not seek emergency care or share their mental state with physicians—meaning they're missed in studies, which often focus on emergency-room visits and inpatient admissions. According to Katherine Hay, president and CEO of Kids Help Phone—which collects real-time data on youth suicidality across Canada—the number of young people calling to seek help for suicidal thoughts has increased by 110 percent over the past four years. Hay estimates that her team intervenes in an average of eight adolescent suicide attempts per day.

It's a crisis that has overwhelmed the tenuous mental health supports available to most Canadians, and as it shows no sign of stopping, the rest of us are struggling to understand why. Why would someone so young want to take

their own life? And why are more adolescents reaching this point now than ever before? "There is an underlying emotional need that isn't getting met," says Jennifer Russel, a psychiatrist at BC Children's Hospital. "We need to figure out what that need is and how to meet it."

THERE WAS a feeling in the emergency department, after cases like this one, that was difficult to describe—a kind of collective exhaustion. When we were able to talk about it, we tried in vain to make sense of it. I was new to the department, but a long-time nurse told me it hadn't always been like this. Something had changed, something was getting worse. But what?

According to Rob Billard, a social worker and former youth crisis worker, it has become more common for children to be indiscriminately exposed to distressing news from around the globe. "It's not the children that are different now—it's the society," he says. "Today's tech exposes young ones to information in a challenging way. They get close to subjects that are quite adult-like without an adult to discuss them with. We're leaving young people to their own devices to deal with really heavy stuff."

The climate emergency is a prime example of world affairs fuelling angst among young people. They understand how their future is synonymous with the future of the planet, and they see the complacency of the leaders and corporations complicit in its ruination. For the Greta Thunbergs among them, this leads to activism. But the more that student protests and youth organizing take place without meaningfully shifting political and economic realities, the deeper adolescent hopelessness may become.

Another factor that can cause youth mental health crises to spike is their tendency to spread among peer groups. In the wake of Saskatchewan's 2018 Humboldt Broncos bus crash, Kids Help Phone experienced a cascade of calls from adolescents across the Prairies seeking support for the destabilization of grief and loss, and the organization's stats show ripple effects continuing for over a year afterward. In the summer of 2018, in Nunavut, another region-wide crisis unfolded as twelve young people tried to take their own lives. "We get calls from some Indigenous youths where four, five, or six of their friends have died by suicide," says Hay. "It's contagious."

Periods of economic hardship or general anxiety also take their toll. Recently, Hay noted that the number of adolescents reaching out to Kids Help Phone had increased by 38 percent between 2017 and 2018 in Alberta. "When we dug into the issues, we tied that to economic concerns happening at the time," she says. "If families are in strife due to unemployment or financial strains, the *entire* family is in strife. Kids do not exist in a vacuum." Hay also notes that, during the pandemic, the number of adolescents reaching out for help across the country has been nearly double what it was over the same period last year.

Isolation can exacerbate all kinds of mental health issues, and—even in nonpandemic times—adolescents are in some ways more isolated now than ever. Russel, of BC Children's Hospital, says the increased prevalence of smartphone use has changed the quality of young people's relationships. "Being alone in your room on social media might be the loneliest thing for teenagers," she says. She contrasts this state of affairs with that of her own childhood: when friends or classmates called, it would have likely been on a family line. Now, if their child has an upsetting interaction, parents often aren't aware of it. Friendship spats, relationship breakups, even public humiliation—it all happens behind closed doors, on the backlit screens that dominate young people's attention.

A glimmer of hope in the rising numbers of young people coming forward with mental health issues is that it's becoming less stigmatized to do so. "Numbers are rising because mental health is becoming more recognized," BC minister Judy Darcy told me. "They are learning that it is okay that they are not okay." But it's unlikely that destigmatization can account for the entire statistical leap, and regardless, a health care system able to support every adolescent experiencing mental illness is long overdue.

When children express suicidal thoughts, the knee-jerk reaction of many adults is to head to the closest emergency department. But some parents I met in the emergency department had been struggling to find a way into the mental health system for a while and came to us as a last resort. While emergency departments may be the only choice in some cases, many people are stunned at how few resources are available once they arrive. More than once, I witnessed desperate parents yelling at staff about the lack of treatment options available for their child. One mother scoffed that their visit was nothing more than an exercise in filling out forms.

Unless a hospital is in a major city, it's unlikely to have a pediatric psychiatrist, and emergency staff are not specially trained in pediatric mental health. Some hospitals are experimenting with telepsychiatry programs, in which an on-call pediatric psychiatrist will assess and counsel youth via video chat, but these programs are often available only during the day. Overnight—which is when Kids Help Phone reports a surge of distressed callers—hospitals in smaller cities or rural areas typically have only an emergency physician, who can often do little more than make outpatient referrals (the first step in a treatment-seeking process that can take many months). In severe cases, they can arrange an ambulance transfer to the closest pediatric hospital for psychiatric admission. (Due to safety concerns, adolescents are generally not admitted to adult psychiatric units.)

Back out in the community, bewildered parents are left on their own to navigate a complex, patchwork system. "It's embarrassing," says Kulik of the state of Ontario's mental health care. Among the most common obstacles are a lack of child psychiatrists accepting new patients, a shortage of doctors to prescribe and renew medications, and excessive wait times for outpatient programs.

While there's a long way to go before this crisis is under control, some health care providers are making progress. In 2018, BC Children's Hospital launched Compass, a program that provides remote clinical support to pediatricians, mental health care providers, primary care physicians, and nurses throughout BC and in parts of the Yukon. The Compass team has so far assisted with over 1,800 cases, and Russel, its clinical director, estimates that, over the past year, they've successfully averted twenty hospital transfers, which would have involved sedating and in some cases intubating patients in order to fly them elsewhere for a higher level of care. In a country like Canada—one of large, sparsely populated regions and many remote communities—Compass could represent a way to extend the best care possible to as much of the country as possible. For the time being, however, programs of its kind are few and far between.

Broadening the coverage of mental health resources is certainly desirable, but it doesn't represent a complete solution: interpersonal relationships are key. The presence of just one supportive adult—a parent, an extended family member, a coach, a guidance counsellor—can be a major determinant of how well a child copes with stress.

And, even if a young person's mental health issues escalate to the point of requiring clinical care, Russel wants parents to know that the situation is never hopeless. "Just because your child has depression or is feeling suicidal at fifteen, that does not mean their future is doomed," she says. "It's like if your child is struggling with math. It does not mean they will struggle their whole lives."

I no longer work in the emergency department, and I don't know where any of the young people I met in their darkest moments are today. But I'll never forget them or the crisis they opened my eyes to. One reason each of them reached the point they did seems to have been how difficult their situations were to talk about, how strong our collective urge can be to look away. I'm looking now, and I'm talking now, and the rest of us should too. ✚

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EDUCATION

Black in the Ivory Tower

Why it's so hard for academics of colour to pursue their dream projects

BY HADIYA RODERIQUE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FARIHAH ALIYAH SHAH

In early June, #BlackInTheIvory went viral on Twitter. Created by Shardé M. Davis, an assistant professor at the University of Connecticut, and Joy Melody Woods, a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin, the hashtag asked Black scholars "to share their experience with higher ed institutions." Academics responded in droves, detailing the myriad ways that Black scholars, scholarship, and excellence have been undermined and undervalued. One person described a colleague remarking that "Blacks have lower IQs than whites," another reported being told that they were "not really Black because [they] are good." Scholars were told that they were just "diversity hire[s]." One Black woman received a student evaluation alleging she had committed malpractice by presenting race as central to American history and saying she should never teach again.

That hashtag led to others within the academic community, like #Strike4BlackLives and #ShutDownSTEM—efforts in which non-Black scholars were asked to pause their day-to-day work to reflect on ways of addressing anti-Black racism in their fields. These conversations were a part of the larger reckoning with systemic racism prompted by George Floyd's murder, a movement that has included protests and calls for widespread change in various industries, including policing, publishing, and news media.

The responses to Davis and Woods's call tell startling tales of unfiltered workplace hostility and racism. But, to me, they are unsurprising—they are the reality of so many professions and institutions. I have told versions of this story myself.

I went to graduate school in large part because of my isolating experiences as a Black woman lawyer on Bay Street—in 2012, I was the only one at my firm, Fasken, which is currently the second largest in the country. To my knowledge, many firms had none. I wanted to understand why, even in the twenty-first century, statistics like this persisted, and I thought academia would offer me answers. I enrolled in a PhD program, at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, in the field of organizational behaviour and human resource management. What I did not expect to find was an environment with even fewer Black faces. For much of my time as a PhD student, I was the only Black academic in my entire program. Like many other professional fields, academia does not reflect the diversity of our country. And, for a Black academic, this can lead to a pervasive sense of being out of place.

When Maydianne Andrade, a professor of ecology, vice-dean, and Canada Research Chair at the University of Toronto, visited Cornell University for her PhD interview in the mid-'90s, she knew she'd be the only Black person in the room. Andrade recalls constant stress over "the feeling that you always stand out, no matter what. People will always remember what you said: you were the person in the room they could identify later." Alissa Trotz, a professor of Caribbean studies and the director of women and gender studies at the University of Toronto, recounts a time at graduate school when she similarly felt like she stood out. During a class in the early '90s, a leading lecturer used the n-word in reference to an example. "My immediate response was shame. I still don't know how to make sense of that," she says. "I was this incandescent light in the room, and I wanted it to shut off."

Stories like this aren't hard to find. They've been logged in investigations into the experiences of people of colour and Indigenous faculty members; in diversity and equity reports; in scholars having their work ignored or coopted or silenced. I recently participated in a Black


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graduate student town hall, which asked its seventy-plus attendees if we had ever "observed or experienced racism, aggression or bias" at the university. The numbers were stark: 18 percent had observed them, 17 percent had experienced them, and the remaining 65 percent reported some combination of the two.

In 2020, it shouldn't take the momentum of a police killing and mass protests to prompt a genuine reckoning with anti-Blackness in academia and other industries. We just have to look at who has a place in the ivory tower and who does not.

In a 1975 talk at Portland State University, Toni Morrison identified distraction as "the very serious function of racism." According to Morrison, racism "keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being." She gives a series of examples—"Somebody says you have no language and so you spend twenty years proving that you do. Somebody says your head isn't shaped properly so you have scientists working on the fact that it is"—to show the extra layer of labour put on Black thinkers to constantly prove the value of their work. Her words still ring true, especially for academia.

Before starting my PhD, I expected my school, my department, and the conferences I attended to be overwhelmingly white. But I was surprised to find that this reality also affected my studies. I had entered higher education to explore questions about representation, but I found the subject of race hard to pursue. During that same town hall, when asked if racism, aggression, or bias had caused them to rethink or change their programs, classes, or career plans, 70 percent of participants answered yes.

I was one of them. I had a project I wanted to take on: a series of four studies that would examine whether Black women suffered the same penalties as white women for asserting themselves in the workplace—things like speaking up, seeking power, and exhibiting dominance. Based on various stereotypes of Black femininity, I hypothesized a pattern of results: that Black women would be allowed to speak up and show dominance but would be punished for seeking power. I had done the research and secured the funding. But I was worried that, if I studied race, it would hurt me when I went on the job market. I would be pigeonholed as a Black person who studied Black people and therefore assumed to be too personally invested. Ultimately, I abandoned the work in favour of a study on parenthood and gender—a subject that seemed more marketable and objective, especially when investigated by a childless person.

I'm not the only academic to have felt the pressure to keep race out of my research. In a 2003 Queen's University report on faculty of colour and Indigenous faculty, one staff member described how, when they had joined the university, they had been "cautioned by a colleague about not publishing too much in the areas of racism and anti-racism." This warning conveyed a distinct message—"that [race] is not a legitimate field of research and that it would not be taken seriously in terms of future promotion and tenure decisions"—and was similar to the fear that rattled around in my own brain. But I still felt like there was no one in the entire business school I could talk to about it.

Trotz's experiences as a young academic researching the Caribbean were similar. "We are asking questions about places that are not seen as important. There is an additional set of work just to say that it evens matters." She describes this extra labour as time spent to "clear the space" before getting to work at all—the very distraction that Morrison spoke of.

During a faculty meeting to talk about racism, Andrade asked the same poll questions about changing one's academic focus. The departmental results—from a much whiter group—were far lower than those from the town hall. "Seeing that 70 percent [of town hall participants] had changed their classes or career plans or their major because of racism," she says of her department, "it kind of struck them dumb."

There were many times, even well into the writing of my dissertation, that I wanted to quit my project and go back to my original idea, but sunk costs prevailed. I chose not to pursue an academic job after graduating, but I sometimes wonder if I might have been keener on it if I'd focused on the work I truly cared about. The original idea had thrilled me in a way that my eventual dissertation didn't. I wanted to know more about what it meant to be a Black woman seeking power in the workplace. I still do. Would the results have inspired me to pursue further research and teaching? The decision to move away from that project is, and always will be, the biggest regret of my academic career.

A recent study on the link between diversity and innovation found that scientists from underrepresented groups can produce work at a higher rate of novelty, measured by the number of new links generated between existing ideas. What often happens, though, is that their novel contributions are "devalued and discounted" and are less likely to garner them academic positions and successful careers. As a result, they leave the field before the fruits of their creativity and labour can be realized. This is the kind of excellence we are failing to reward and the kind we repeatedly lose.

We need to remove the barriers to entry along the academic chain. It's not just hiring practices—it's eradicating the bias against fields of study seen as "less legitimate," like work that centres the experiences of racialized people. It's making sure that academics from underrepresented groups have the support they need to pursue their projects—and, moreover, that they are not forced to constantly prove their work's value.

Sidelining the work of Black and Indigenous academics does more than limit academic research and social advancement. I ask Trotz what she thinks we lose when only a narrow subset of ideas and topics are seen as worthy, or when we ask questions about only particular segments of our society. Her answer is simple and immediate: "Everything."

HADIYA RODERIQUE is a writer, consultant, speaker, and recently minted PhD living in Toronto.

MEDICINE

How to Vaccinate 38 Million People

The logistics of building the fastest inoculation program in history

BY DANIELLE GROEN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GLENN HARVEY

THE SPRAWLING Medicago facility in suburban Quebec City smells like a botanical garden and sounds like an airplane hangar. Thousands of *Nicotiana benthamiana* plants, a close cousin of tobacco, grow in long rows amid noisy ventilation. When the plants are six or seven weeks old, maybe twenty centimetres tall, they go on a journey, lined up by the dozens onto a flatbed that's then inverted over a tank filled with fluid. The plants get dunked. The tank seals. And the roots are trapped in the air between the liquid and the lid, so a vacuum hose can slip into that space and begin to suck.

The plants act like sponges: apply pressure to the roots and the leaves collapse; release that pressure a minute later and they expand, absorbing the liquid deep into their cells. This particular bath is filled with a bacteria that's been slightly tweaked. Bits of its DNA have been swapped out for DNA from the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

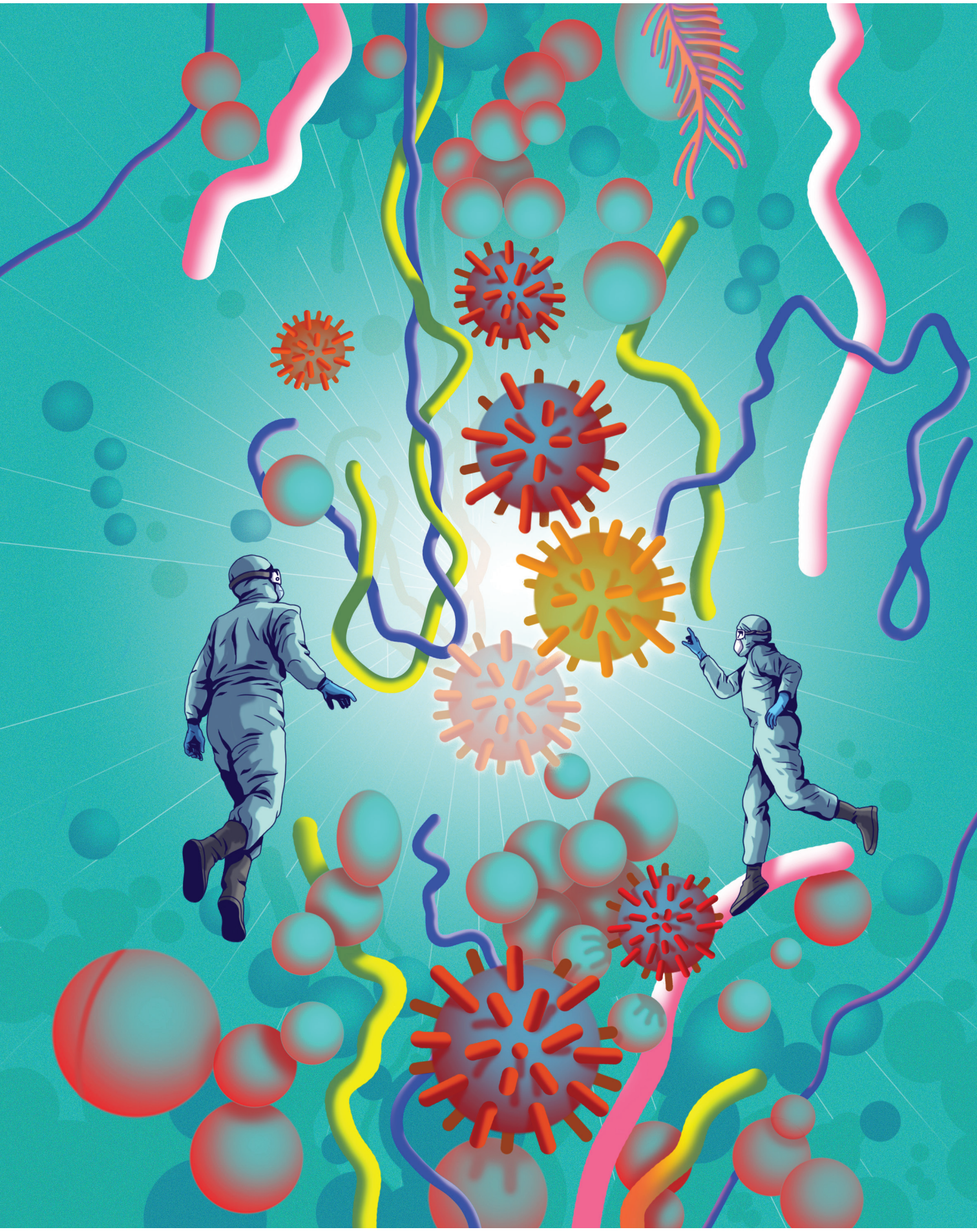
Once the plants come out of the tank, they're moved to an incubation chamber, the temperature, light, and humidity tightly controlled. For the next week or so, the bacteria will insert its genetic information into the plants, triggering the production of millions of spike proteins in every cell of the infected leaves. The spikes self-assemble into something called a virus-like particle—not the virus itself but a particle roughly the size and shape of SARS-CoV-2. Gowned workers come and harvest the plants, stripping the leaves like they're plucking basil for pesto, then send them on a conveyor belt that passes through what's basically a paper shredder.

The chopped-up leaves head next into a vat of enzymes and are left to soak overnight. The enzymes work to break apart the cell walls, releasing the virus-like particles so they can be collected, purified, and converted into a yellowish vaccine. This doppelgänger for SARS-CoV-2 can't inflict any real damage, but "when you inject it into someone, the immune system sees it as though it's the real virus and thinks, Oh my God, there's an invader here," says Medicago executive Nathalie Landry. "And then it will trigger a good immune response."

A vaccine is, in essence, a trick—a sleight of hand that convinces your body to mount a counterattack to a given pathogen before that pathogen actually infects you. There are various ways to pull the trick off: vaccines can be made with a weakened virus, or a killed virus, or just a key part of the virus, or a part of the virus piggybacking on a different, benign virus, or an instruction manual for making that part of the virus yourself. In each approach, you get the benefits of an immune response without the messy business of a disease.

It's a crucial tool for combatting a virus impervious to borders, seasonality, and many of the lockdown measures employed by anxious nations. So, when US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Anthony Fauci tells Congress, as he did in July, that he's optimistic a vaccine will be ready in late 2020 or early 2021, it's tempting to imagine that as the moment when we can once again engage in all the activities that remain laced with fear, like hopping a plane, or seeing a concert, or hugging a grandpa.

An effective vaccine represents an enormous, exciting move in that direction. But it's not the pandemic finish line—it's more like a pandemic off-ramp. Epidemiological, logistical, and ethical roads still lie ahead: to determine how long and how well that vaccine's protection can last, to manufacture enough of it to jab into billions of arms, to allocate the first batches of supply between countries and within their populations, and to persuade vaccine skeptics to roll up a sleeve. We're trying to protect the entire planet, all 7.8 billion of us. "The job isn't done when you've got an effective vaccination," says Ross Upshur, a professor at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health who co-chairs the World Health Organization's COVID-19 ethics working group. "The job is done when you get that vaccine out to everyone who needs it."



Humans have been trying to outsmart viruses for millennia. By the late 1600s, Chinese doctors had formalized their recipe: grind a smallpox scab into a powder and blow it up a healthy patient's nose. (Apparently, for boys, this was done in the left nostril, and for girls, the right.) An ambassador to Britain sent reports of seventeenth-century North African surgeons making a small incision between the thumb and forefinger, then squeezing smallpox pus into the wound. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Edward Jenner extracted fluid from a cowpox blister, taken from—who else?—a milkmaid, and scratched it into the arm of an eight-year-old boy. These efforts may seem crude now—we prefer our vaccines packed tidily in glass vials, injected though sterile hypodermic needles—but the idea remains the same: teach the immune system how to ward off a virus so it has a head start should infection occur.

When a new pathogen invades the human body, our innate immune system recognizes the presence of something noxious and sends up an alarm. The first responders are proteins that meddle with a virus in order to limit its ability to reproduce. "This is what's called the dumb part of the immune system, though that's quite mean because it's not dumb at all," says Brian Ward, an infectious-disease professor at McGill University and the medical officer for Medicago. But it's also not precise: the innate immune system attacks anything that appears foreign and troublesome.

Cue the adaptive immune system. "When cells are infected with a pathogen, they gobble it up, break it into pieces, and then start showing those pieces to the cells, saying, Hey, I found something that doesn't belong here, can you please get rid of it?" says Marc-André Langlois, a molecular virologist at the University of Ottawa. B cells (a type of white blood cell) begin making antibodies: proteins that can subdue a virus by blocking its ability to get into the body's cells. T cells (another type of white blood cell) arrive with two purposes: to help B cells make more antibodies and to assassinate cells that have been infected by the virus. It's a more sophisticated response, but it's also slower, taking a week, sometimes longer, to mobilize. "So, if you have a rapidly replicating virus, and it doubles, doubles, doubles, waiting seven days for antibodies might be too long and you might not survive," Langlois says.

If the infection is cleared, many of the body's B and T cells then die off themselves. Some, though, transform into memory cells, typically bunkered down in your bone marrow, where they wait to spring into action the next time that same pathogen attacks. "All it takes is one B cell to recognize the target and get activated, and it will start proliferating so it can produce the antibodies," Langlois says. "That's why vaccines work. They give you this life-saving element of having the antibodies ready to be deployed." A defence that would otherwise take the body weeks to mount can be summoned in just a few hours.

A vaccine is, in essence, a trick, and there are various ways to pull it off.

We've come a long way from smallpox pus, but to develop a vaccine, scientists still need to pick their poison. In modern medicine, that decision involves choosing whether to use the entire virus or just a vital part of it. Whole-virus vaccines are the traditional approach. One strategy, dating back to the 1930s, is to take the pathogen—grown in giant batches of chicken eggs or, decades later, in cells—and then kill it, usually with heat, chemicals, or radiation. Because the virus is dead, it doesn't cause disease once introduced to the body, even in people with weakened immune systems; because the virus is dead, it also doesn't always cause a strong immune response, often requiring multiple doses. This approach is used in the flu shot and a hepatitis A vaccine, as well as in the one for polio, which a global vaccination effort has essentially wiped out.

In a more recent variation on the whole-virus vaccine, a pathogen is weakened in a lab rather than killed outright. Chances are you've been jabbed with a bunch of these vaccines: they're how we fight measles, chicken pox, yellow fever, and tuberculosis. Here, the cost-benefit analysis is reversed: because the vaccine closely resembles a natural infection, it typically elicits a robust, enduring response; because the vaccine is more potent, though, people with compromised immune systems are often unable to get it at all. But, by using the entire virus, the vaccine builds an immune response to many different parts of the pathogen. "The whole-virus vaccine is like a big shield in front of you," Ward says. "If you're in a *Star Wars* movie and someone is shooting lasers at you, you're much safer behind that shield."

Yet a smaller shield, precisely positioned, can still protect you by blocking an important part of the virus rather than the whole thing. There are several ways of introducing this target protein—which is called the antigen—to the body. Most of them require another ingredient to fortify the shield: an adjuvant, usually aluminum, which for the past ninety years has been added to vaccines to boost the immune response. "An adjuvant is a little like hot sauce," says Robert Kozak, a microbiologist at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. It livens up what's already on your plate.

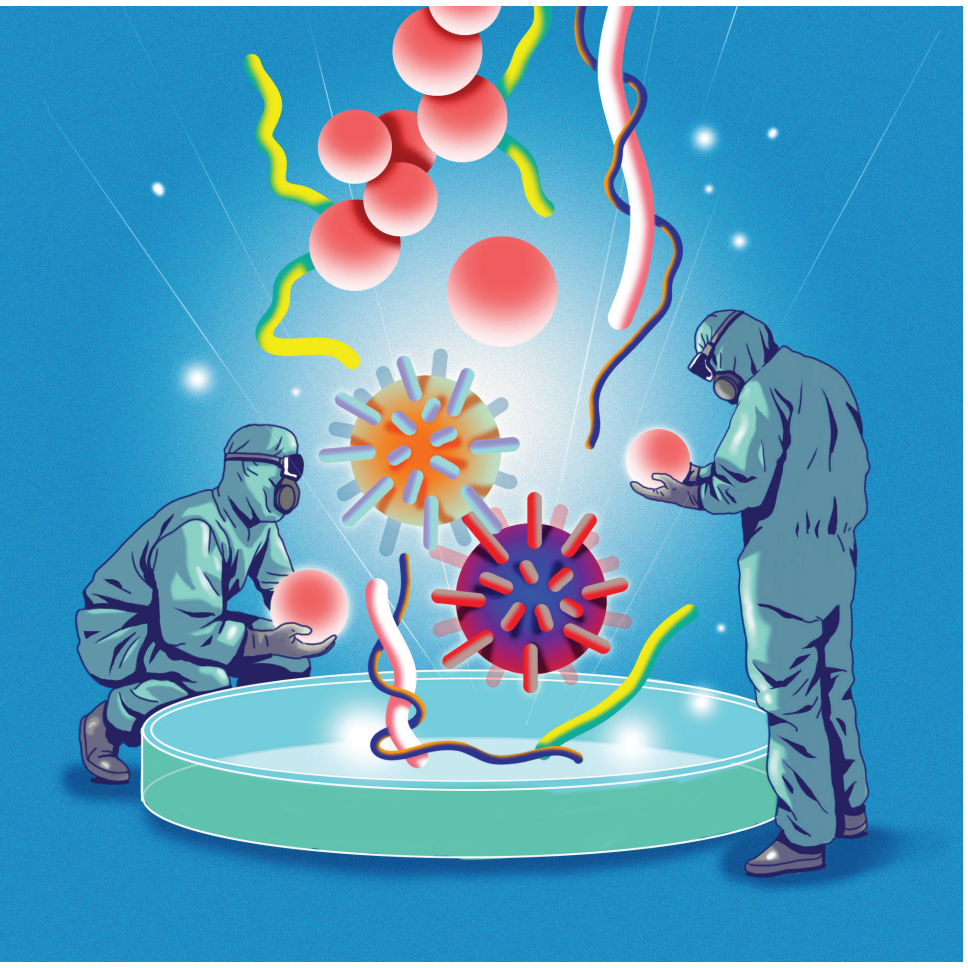
One method of delivering the target protein to your body is to deploy a weakened common-cold virus, called an adenovirus, as a microscopic Trojan horse. That cold virus is unlikely to cause much damage, but it's hugely efficient at slipping inside cells and releasing the antigen. Though scientists see promise in this approach, only one adenovirus vaccine has ever been approved, anywhere. In part, that's because vaccines tend not to make a ton of money, and it's wildly

expensive to develop a new platform, so funding can be hard to come by. It's also because adenovirus-vaccine candidates are in human trials for complicated diseases, like HIV and malaria, which are challenging targets.

Another method skips the Trojan horse altogether and injects you directly with the pathogen's critical protein. Virus-like-particle vaccines, such as Medicago's plant-grown candidate, are a type of these protein-based vaccines. It's a proven method—HPV and hepatitis B are just two examples—and there are usually few side effects once you're given the shot.

Then there are genetic vaccines, which don't deliver the antigen itself but instead issue a blueprint of that target protein to our bodies, hijacking our own cells to produce it. In a DNA vaccine, DNA containing the gene for the antigen is delivered to the cells. The cells copy those genetic instructions into molecules called messenger RNA (mRNA), which issue marching orders to the body to assemble the antigen. "The antigen is then presented to the immune system, [which] mounts a defence," says Gary Kobinger, one of the scientists behind the Ebola vaccine, who is now working on a DNA candidate for a COVID-19 vaccine for Laval University. It's a relatively new method of vaccination, though Kobinger points out that, "in the field of experimental vaccines, it's quite old," a technology discovered back in the early '90s.

Messenger RNA vaccines bypass the DNA and go straight to the marching orders. The genetic material for the antigen is produced synthetically, then packed inside a pod made of lipid molecules, which slide easily into the cells. The benefits are that there's no messing around with infectious material and the vaccine's production time can be cut down dramatically, which is why some researchers believe a genetic vaccine for COVID-19 will be ready first. The disadvantage is that this is uncharted territory: no DNA or mRNA vaccines are currently approved for human use.



SARS-COV-2 is a stealthy operator. It has a gift for binding its spike proteins—those knobby mushrooms that every coronavirus illustration has burned into our brain—to receptors on particular cells scattered in high numbers along the lining of our respiratory tract. When contact is made, it creates an opening through which the virus can pour its genetic code, the RNA, inside our bodies. "The moment the RNA enters the body, it takes [over] the cell—there's no wasting time," says Natalia Martin Orozco, vice-president of drug development at Toronto-based Providence Therapeutics, which pivoted from developing an mRNA vaccine for cancer to one for COVID-19. The first proteins that SARS-CoV-2 produces are not to make more copies of itself but instead to suppress an immune response. "It says, Okay, let's block everything that is going to stop me from multiplying," Martin Orozco says. "After that, it starts producing what it needs to build the virus and grow."

There are now more than 200 vaccine candidates for COVID-19 in development around the world, using every conceivable approach. The vast majority of them, however, zero in on the spike as the vaccine's target protein: the University of Oxford, Johnson & Johnson, and CanSino Biologics all insert the spike into weakened common-cold viruses; Novavax's vaccine attaches the proteins to microscopic particles that are used as carriers; Moderna's and Pfizer's candidates encode the spike into their mRNA. It's a good bet. The spikes are found in abundance on the surface of the virus, so they're what our immune system sees first. "With the first SARS, we saw that the virus used the spike protein to enter cells," says Kozak. "Viruses can be shockingly unoriginal sometimes, so if blocking that protein protected you against SARS One, it will probably work against SARS Two."

Not all of these candidates, in the end, will work—many of them won't. (A sobering statistic: one 2016 study found that nearly nine out of every ten new drugs fail in the human-testing phase.) And it's not yet clear what exactly will ward this virus off. "We don't know the relative importance and contribution of antibodies

and T cells in terms of protection against COVID," says Manish Sadarangani, director of the Vaccine Evaluation Center, in Vancouver. Immunity isn't an on/off switch: there are multiple levels of protection conferred by either shaking off a disease or receiving its vaccine. Some vaccines, like the one for hepatitis A, provide sterilizing immunity, which prevents the infection and its transmission almost entirely. Others, like those for diphtheria and tetanus, generate neutralizing immunity, where an infection can occur but won't get very far and can't make someone sick. Sometimes, as with the shingles vaccine, recipients aren't fully covered but experience a milder version of the disease. Often, protection isn't life-long, so we need booster shots to shore up our immunity.

When it comes to coronaviruses, immune responses tend to be short-lived: two to three years for the first SARS virus, for example, after which people exposed to that same pathogen would likely fall sick once again. Still, three years of protection sounds pretty good right now. As Martin Orozco says, "Even if the vaccine lasted just one season, that, to me, would be a really great accomplishment." In the midst of a pandemic, a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine that performs as well as a flu shot is nothing to sneeze at.

TWICE A YEAR, a consortium of scientists representing more than 100 influenza centres in more than 100 countries descends on the World Health Organization (WHO) to pick the flu strains that should be combatted by seasonal vaccines. For the northern hemisphere, these selections are made in February; for the southern hemisphere, September. Once the recommendations are made, the viruses are produced in WHO laboratories, then shipped to the companies around the world that manufacture the corresponding vaccines.

There is no centralized body whipping up batches of SARS-CoV-2 for developers looking to try their hand at a COVD-19 vaccine. Instead, they need the genetic code for the virus, which Chinese researchers sequenced in the second week of January and shared in a public database. Once scientists determined what was inside the 30,000 "letters" of this coronavirus's RNA, they could decide which proteins to target in their vaccines.

After developers pick their antigen and their delivery system, they test it, starting with animals. Because ferrets and hamsters are, like us, naturally susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, they were a popular choice for early vaccine trials at the University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac). If the vaccine protects those animals from infection, the next step is a safety trial with dozens of people, to see if fevers spike or injected arms swell, followed by another trial, which measures how well an immune response to the virus has been produced. Then it's on to the third trial, where thousands of volunteers are monitored for a statistically significant difference between rates of infection in an unvaccinated control group and in people who actually got the jab. At least half a dozen leading candidates have entered phase-three trials, including ones from the University of Oxford, Moderna, and Pfizer. Currently, the WHO has set the minimum bar for an effective vaccine at an infection-reduction rate of 50 percent, though 70 percent is preferred.

What's needed to make enough doses for these trials depends on the type of vaccine. For Medicago's plant-based candidate, there must be well-stocked greenhouses and a dunking tank. To take another example: at VIDO-InterVac, where researchers are working on a protein-based vaccine, they begin with a single cell. "We take the gene from the virus that encodes for the spike protein, and we put that gene into the single cell, which now thinks it is its own protein," says VIDO-InterVac director and CEO Volker Gerdts. At first, scientists use a three-litre beaker that contains everything necessary to make a cell happy: some sugars, a couple of amino acids, a nice warm environment, and a little CO_2, so the cell is fooled into believing it's still in a body. One cell divides into two, then four, then eight, then sixteen; the three-litre beaker becomes twenty litres, then 250, all the way up to a 1,000- or 2,000-litre bioreactor. From one individual cell, you can make enough of the protein for thousands, even millions of doses.

Gerdts's team wants just that protein in its vaccine, without sugar or waste or any of those extra bits. To isolate the spike, the liquid will get separated in a centrifuge: spun so the heavier waste and cell walls fall to the bottom, leaving the lighter protein on top. It will then get purified, so anything else that lingers is removed. "It gets really cleaned up to the point where you just have a very concentrated, pure substance," Gerdts says. "And then you put it in a glass vial."

MAKING A successful vaccine is one challenge. Making enough of it to satisfy world demand is another. There are, of course, all sorts of regulations and standards concerning how to go about production: "I can't head into my basement and start brewing up a vaccine," says Curtis Cooper, president of the Canadian Foundation for Infectious Diseases. Every facility needs to conform to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), which are exceptionally specific rules set out by the WHO that ensure quality control. You want consistency over time so that each successive batch is precisely the same.

Many Canadian labs can produce enough vaccine for their clinical research under these strict GMP conditions. But, when it comes to scaling up production, we're not in nearly as strong a position. Gerdts says that there are two facilities in Canada with large-scale production capacity: Medicago and the National Research Council, which partnered with CanSino Biologics to produce its vaccine and received a recent $126 million federal boost. At Medicago's clinical facility in Quebec City, 20 million doses of its plant-based vaccine, if successful, can roll out over a year; there's a commercial facility in North Carolina that can manufacture another 100 million doses annually for whoever signs a contract. A third facility is slated to be built in Quebec, with greenhouses the size of two football fields, though that won't be completed until 2023. And, in March, VIDO-InterVac

received $23.3 million from the Canadian government, half of which will be used to complete its own much larger facility, which should be ready by next July. In the meantime, Gerdts is compelled to wait until another manufacturer can begin to produce his candidate. "Canada does not have the manufacturing capacity that is needed for making a vaccine for the world," he says. "We're not even close to making enough for Canadians."

What happened? Marc-André Langlois believes that—at least before this very moment—there wasn't much of an appetite to equip the country for a hypothetical pandemic. "It's generally unpopular to invest in preparedness, because you have all the other urgent commitments that start creeping up," he says. "People might not want $300 million spent on making a vaccine-manufacturing facility for another virus that could potentially burn out."

"The best immunization system is almost invisible."

It's also a predictable outcome of operating in a global economy. "We outsource a lot of our vaccine procurement to these big multinationals in Europe, and we have not invested in the production capacity in Canada," says VIDO-InterVac's associate director of business development, Paul Hodgson. Canadian branches of international pharmaceutical companies, like GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur, are capable of producing other vaccines, but "it's not like they have extra capacity just sitting there to push a new vaccine through," he says. "It's a matter of priorities—when there's an opioid crisis or roads need repairs, where do you put the money? But, if you think research is expensive, you should try disease."

That has sent Canada looking for supplies elsewhere. The federal government has ordered 75 million syringes and needles from medical-technology company Becton Dickinson, enough to inoculate nearly every Canadian twice, and issued bids to secure a similar quantity of alcohol swabs, gauze strips, and bandages. "Our government is working on all possible fronts to deliver safe and effective treatments and vaccines to Canadians as quickly as possible," procurement minister Anita Anand says. "What this means is, while we are working with domestic suppliers, we are also pursuing international arrangements." In early August, she announced the first of these arrangements: a pair of deals with American companies Pfizer and Moderna for tens of millions of doses of their respective MRNA vaccines. By month's end, Canada had also secured 38 million doses of Johnson & Johnson's candidate and 76 million doses of Novavax's vaccine.

Plenty of other countries inked deals of their own this summer: the UK reserved 100 million doses of the University of Oxford's vaccine while the US secured another 300 million—that's nearly a quarter of Oxford's projected annual supply gone. By mid-August, preorders of COVID-19 vaccine candidates were reportedly stretching toward 6 billion doses, almost all of them claimed by wealthy nations. None of these vaccines has yet been proven to work.

There's another risk in relying on international sources: the goods might never show up. Early in the pandemic, for example, the White House ordered medical manufacturing titan 3M to stop exporting N95 face masks to Canada and elsewhere until the US shored up its own supply. The clinical trial for CanSino's vaccine candidate was meant to start in Halifax this past May. Chinese customs refused to release the shipment; by late summer, the trial had to be called off.

Global initiatives do exist to try to level the vaccination playing field. The international immunization nonprofit Gavi is pooling money from dozens of high- and middle-income countries to invest in a number of vaccine candidates, including Oxford's, with the aim of manufacturing 2 billion doses by the end of 2021. That's meant to be enough for each country to vaccinate 20 percent of its population, with an emphasis on front line workers and vulnerable groups and with the cost fully covered for low-income nations. In June, Canada pledged $120 million to the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, a global project that includes Gavi's vaccine-distribution initiative. China and the US haven't contributed.

But every country, company, and initiative will be competing for the same limited supplies; already, there have been murmurings of glass shortages that could curb the availability of vials. Stoppers are made by only a handful of companies. And it doesn't take much to cause a major bottleneck. "At the beginning of the pandemic, we didn't have enough nasopharyngeal swabs for COVID-19 tests," says Allison McGeer, a senior clinical physician at Toronto's Sinai Health System. More than 100,000 swabs, ordered by the federal government, arrived in Ontario contaminated by mould. "These are tiny, [cheap] things, but if you don't have any of them, you're paralyzed," she says. "There's a long list of those things that go into vaccine manufacturing that have a potential to pose the same sort of problems. There only has to be one little grommet missing and the whole system doesn't work."

Vaccines are designed to prevent infection. You don't want to cause another infection altogether by putting that vaccine in a grimy vial. Sterilization is extremely important: this is a product moving from the outside world directly into our muscles. "We have to prepare and sterilize the vial, prepare and sterilize the stopper, all the tubing and fill needles, all the parts and pieces that would touch the vaccine," says Christopher Procyshyn, co-founder of Vancouver-based Vanrx Pharmasystems. "Everything is individually sterilized and then brought together in an aseptic process, which basically means: don't screw it up."

However it has been made, the vaccine arrives at a facility like Vanrx's in a bag or a tank, frozen or in liquid form. It's most often sterilized through microfiltration,

which passes the product through a filter with pores smaller in diameter than any known bacteria. The glass vials also arrive and are sterilized: washed with purified water, then blasted with heat. "Glass is a greasy material, so we have to take it to a high enough temperature that we burn it off, much like a self-cleaning oven," Procyshyn says. The vials go into a filling machine, where they're sterilized using high-pressure steam, as are the stoppers and caps.

In conventional technologies, what happens next "looks a lot like *Laverne and Shirley*—like a food-processing line," Procyshyn says. "You have conveyor belts coming in," and a machine positions a whole bunch of tubes, which, he continues, "squeeze in a pulsation manner and fill the vial with the liquid, the stopper, the cap." Vanrx automates the process inside a large machine, where the filling is done by a robot. Procyshyn suspects that, given the need to conserve supplies, vaccines for COVID-19 will be packaged in multidose vials, enough to vaccinate twenty patients each. The fastest machines in the industry run around 600 units per minute: for one facility, on a full production day, that translates to somewhere between 15 and 20 million doses. "But don't forget that other drugs are continuing to be made," Procyshyn says. "Not all facilities are suitable for this, and Canada has fewer…than the US and Europe. A large part of what we're working through right now is which vaccine at which available site and what capacity."

Now ensconced in its multidose vial, the vaccine is inspected by employees, labelled, and given a lot number, essential for safety tracking. After that, it has to be transported through the cold chain, a standard practice to ensure that, every time the vaccine is handed off, it maintains the appropriate temperature, typically between 2 and 8 degrees for refrigerated vaccines or -15 degrees for frozen ones.

That means the moment it leaves the doorstep of the manufacturer, bundled in boxes wrapped in isothermal packaging, the vaccine is kept in chilly containers. The plane that transports it is refrigerated, as is the truck that picks it up from the airport, as is the wholesaler or warehouse in Canada where it's kept before being moved to health care facilities across the country. "This is a well-established process," says Mina Tadrous, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy. "We've been doing this for decades and we're really good at it."

No one needs to rely on the diligence of others: surveillance systems exist to make sure that the cold chain hasn't been broken. "It used to be that you'd carry in a box of vaccines, and there was a temperature probe inside that provided a continuous recording, so you'd make sure they hadn't been frozen or gotten too hot," McGeer says. Then, in 1996, the WHO introduced temperature-sensitive stickers that monitor the heat exposure of individual vaccine vials. "It's a stellar development: a little colour-coded square that tells you whether it's been out of temperature," she says. The square starts lightly tinged; if it gets dark, the vial needs to be discarded. As a result, clinicians can determine whether the whole box has been compromised or just a few vaccine vials fell out of the cold chain. When supply is tight, it helps to have every possible vial on hand.

We might be inventing a vaccine from scratch, but we're not inventing a whole new system to get it into the arms of Canadians. "The best immunization system is almost invisible," says Natasha Crowcroft, inaugural director of the University of Toronto's Centre for Vaccine Preventable Diseases and now a senior technical adviser at the WHO. "People talk about immunization being the victim of its own success: when everything is going smoothly, no one knows how much work goes on behind the scenes." In Canada, this work involves a terrific amount of coordination between the federal government, responsible for procuring the vaccine; the provinces and territories, which determine how many doses they'll need and which ones to deliver to which people; and local jurisdictions, which make on-the-ground decisions about administering it.

When it comes to distributing vaccines for COVID-19, Canada will most likely take cues from the influenza-vaccination programs we have in place. For those, Health Canada approves and then bulk orders the vaccines, choosing a couple of different candidates in case there are manufacturing snafus or to target certain segments of the population—seniors tend to get a high-dose flu shot because their immune systems benefit from the added boost. Buying in bulk helps cushion the cost: Moderna, which has said it plans to make a profit from its SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, will lower the price for big orders. The provinces then determine how exactly to get the doses out, allotting a certain share to family doctors, public health clinics, community clinics, and pharmacies. Typically, they'll also decide whether they will publicly fund vaccination and for whom. Ontario has a universal flu-vaccination program, for example, and BC and Quebec do not, though it's hard to imagine that anyone will have to shell out for a COVID-19 shot.

While flu shots are ordered and distributed based on how many people got one the previous year, planning for COVID-19 vaccines presents its own challenges: we don't know what the supply is going to be, how well it will work in different populations, or how many doses the vaccine might require. "If they're anticipating that we're going to have tons of doses in a short period of time, then it would make sense to have as many vaccinators as possible," says Jeff Kwong, epidemiologist and interim director of the Centre for Vaccine Preventable Diseases. You could walk into your family doctor's office, the local library, the nearest Shoppers Drug Mart or Pharmasave—take your pick. "But, if they're going to have relatively low numbers of doses available each week, then having a more limited number of vaccinators is more efficient." You don't want to run into a situation where one physician has fifty doses sitting idly in a fridge while another scrambles to contend with an out-the-door line.

For that reason, vaccines could be administered just in public health clinics. "After the H1N1 pandemic, we really spent a lot of time developing our

mass-immunization clinic plan," says Toronto's associate medical officer of health, Vinita Dubey. "That was the time to detail some of the boots-on-the-ground logistics." The plan includes everything from where to hold large vaccination clinics and how to keep them staffed to strategies for managing lines and signage for orienting people. "It's not like we don't have experience doing this," Kwong says. "It's about preparing for multiple scenarios and trying to be as responsible as possible."

In fact, administering the flu shot this influenza season will be a good trial run for getting out a COVID-19 vaccine. Although physical-distancing measures and travel restrictions might mean a milder flu season, health care officials in Canada are expecting higher demand this winter. "We know we will have smaller, more frequent clinics because large clinics become a large gathering," Dubey says. Expect longer hours, assigned appointments, and perhaps even at-home vaccinations, especially for high-risk or vulnerable people. "We're also reimagining our school-based clinics because we know that doing vaccines in schools is going to look different this year," she says. "That's preparation for COVID-vaccine planning for sure."

We are, by now, well accustomed to thinking in waves: waves of COVID-19 infections, waves of lockdown measures, waves of fear and fatigue. Almost certainly, we will also have to contend with waves of vaccination as batches roll off manufacturing lines or we wait for new candidates to be approved. Still, someone is going to be first to pull up a sleeve. "We want the vaccine now, and we want enough for everybody," McGeer says. "But, if we have enough vaccine for 5 percent of the population, then who will be that 5 percent?"

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), formed back in 1964 to review administering the polio vaccine, among others, makes recommendations on immunization practices and schedules, including which populations should get the vaccine first. "We look at age-specific risks for disease and complications, the ability of people to respond to the vaccine according to age, and whether there is a risk because of occupation," says NACI vice-chair Shelley Deeks. "Not only do we want to protect the vulnerable but, because this a pandemic, we want to ensure essential services can continue."

NACI advises on priorities, but because health care is a provincial responsibility, it's up to the provinces and territories to actually implement those recommendations. "There are real differences that might result in different strategies based on where you are," McGeer says. "Who you target in Nunavut is not the same as in downtown Toronto." The expectation is that provinces have a closer eye on the particular needs of their communities.

And it's the provinces that actually set most of the disease-control goals. Do you vaccinate to prevent mortality? In that case, for this virus, the elderly need to be prioritized. Do you vaccinate to reduce transmission and spread? There are some house-partying twenty-somethings in Kelowna who could get the jab. Or do you vaccinate widely in an attempt to achieve herd immunity? NACI advises that front line workers be prioritized because they're at a greater risk of infection based on the work they do. But that's not axiomatic: "There's no commandment in the bible of pandemic response that health care workers go first," Upshur says. "You have to make arguments, and those arguments are based partly on data and partly on ethics." We know that racialized and low-income people are infected at rates wildly disproportionate to their populations, not for any epidemiological reason but because of historical and economic disadvantages. This inequality persists for those working in the health care system itself: *The Lancet* published a study of almost 100,000 front line health care workers in the UK and US, which found that racialized workers were nearly twice as likely as their white colleagues to come down with COVID-19. Should decision making about vaccine prioritization be based on structural social causes instead?

But history complicates that approach as well: a long tradition of surveillance and systemic discrimination in the health care system gives racialized people a very good reason not to want to go first. "In a public health emergency, where you're using a vaccine that doesn't have a lot of safety and effectiveness data, there's obviously some concern about giving it to the most vulnerable groups, who might feel they're being used as guinea pigs," says Alison Thompson, an associate professor at the University of Toronto's pharmacy school whose research focuses on the ethics of vaccines. "I think it's really about being as transparent as possible through this entire process of development, manufacturing, and distribution. People need to be able to see what's in the needle." That transparency could also help persuade the one in six Canadians who currently say they would not get the vaccine.

Though it can feel like this virus has been with us for roughly eight centuries, it's not yet been twelve months. In that time, a few hundred vaccine candidates have been created, dozens have entered human trials, and pretty much every promising new technology has been pressed into action. Work that would normally occur in sequence and stall on some bureaucrat's desk is now, thanks to huge financial investments by governments around the world, happening swiftly and in tandem. "The speed is not from sacrificing safety," the WHO's Crowcroft says. "It's sacrificing money." That still won't buy an end to this pandemic as quickly as we'd like: there's much mask-wearing and social distancing and staying home ahead. But the average new vaccine takes about a decade to make it to market. The fastest ever to make it to market, for mumps, arrived in four years. We're virtually guaranteed to shatter that record for COVID-19—one more unprecedented event in an age already full of them.

DANIELLE GROEN is a Toronto-based writer and a winner of the Allan Slaight Prize for Journalism.

Canadian Media's Racism Problem

Under the banner of diversity, racialized journalists are told to bring ourselves and our perspectives to newsrooms. But, if we bring too much of them, we get held back

BY PACINTHE MATTAR
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE VINEBERG

In April 2015, Baltimore was burning. A twenty-five-year-old Black man named Freddie Gray had died after a week-long coma following his violent arrest and "rough ride" in the back of a Baltimore Police Department van. Anger at police brutality had spilled out onto the streets.

I flew to Baltimore to cover the city's history with police brutality for a documentary I was making for CBC Radio. I arrived the day after Baltimore state attorney Marilyn Mosby announced charges against the six police officers involved in Gray's arrest. (They were never convicted.) The charges were considered so rare a sign of accountability that they prompted celebration in Gray's West Baltimore neighbourhood, the first place I headed with my recorder and notebook. It was a partly cloudy day, and a block party was alive with music blaring from massive speakers. DJs, parents, and youth held signs in honour of Gray. This past May and June, I watched more sombre versions of this scene play out with crushing familiarity as, in all fifty US states, crowds of protesters took to the streets with signs commemorating more victims of police brutality.

I stayed till night fell, keeping my eye on my watch. The city was under a 10 p.m. curfew, and helicopters were beginning to circle overhead. Just as I was heading into the subway station to go to my hotel, a young man stopped to ask me what news organization I was with. He seemed keen to talk. I turned my mic on, asked him what his name was—Lonnie Moore, I jotted down in my notebook—and asked him about his own experiences of police encounters in Baltimore.

As we talked, another man walked up and, without missing a beat, joined the conversation. I asked him his name and spelled it out loud to him as I put it in my notebook: J-A-R-E—"No," he corrected me, "J-A-R-R-O-D Jones." These two men were strangers to each other, but as they shared stories, they were soon completing each other's sentences, saying words in unison, and mirroring each other's accounts, including incidents of being called the n-word by various officers. Jarrod Jones recounted unwarranted personal searches. "The police will grab you, make you pull your pants down in front of people," he said. "You know? They tell you, 'Lift your sack up.'" He also said something prescient, though I wouldn't know it until I returned home: "I think that people think we're making this stuff up."

IMAGE CREDIT: ISTOCK/GLOBALSTOCK

I returned to Toronto after a whirlwind thirty-six hours in Baltimore, eager to showcase the stories I'd heard, including Moore's and Jones's. But the executive producer at the time didn't want to air my interview with them. She asked whether I had called the police to respond to Moore's and Jones's accounts of mistreatment. I had tried, but the department—and its union—hadn't returned my calls or emails. Then came the next question: How can you verify that these men gave you their real names?

That's when I learned that, in Canadian media, there's an added burden of proof, for both journalists and sources, that accompanies stories about racism.

I'd worked in journalism for six years by then, and the skepticism toward Moore's and Jones's identities—let alone their experiences—was the first time I'd seen my interviewees' claims met with such a high degree of mistrust. (The executive producer says she regularly asks reporters for verification of sources' names and their accounts. This is the first time I remember her asking it of me.) I trusted the men's names and their experiences because, all around us—including my very presence in Baltimore, specifically in Freddie Gray's neighbourhood—were signs that these experiences were not uncommon. The raw forcefulness with which they spoke was an indication that they were telling me the truth. But there was one more clear sign that I offered to my executive producer about how I knew they had given me their real names: Jarrod Jones had corrected my initial spelling of his first name, which, to me, was proof that he hadn't lied about it. (The executive producer did not recall this part of the conversation.) She seemed unswayed and instead began to remind me about the importance of accuracy and verification as core principles of journalism.

I came out of my executive producer's office with a look on my face that caught the attention of an older white male colleague, who asked me if I was okay. I told him what had happened. He spoke to the executive producer on my behalf. She relented.

I've since faced several such roadblocks in my journalism career. Combined with the experiences of other racialized journalists, they represent a phenomenon I've come to think of as a deep crisis of credibility in Canadian media. There is the lack of trust toward the Black, Indigenous, and other racialized people whose stories we are supposed to cover as a reflection of the world we live in. Then there is the mistrust of the Black, Indigenous, and other racialized journalists who try to report on those stories. Our professionalism is questioned when we report on the communities we're from, and the spectre of advocacy follows us in a way that it does not follow many of our white colleagues.

How can the media be trusted to report on what Black and other racialized people are facing when it doesn't even believe them?

There is a reckoning underway that has spared almost no industry, sparked by an alarming succession of killings of Black people in the US: Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and many more. The violence of those deaths, and the inescapable racism that underpinned them all, incited a tidal wave of anger and fatigue from Black people who had long been calling out the discrimination that they face in their daily lives. From academia to theatre, the beauty industry to major tech corporations, Black and other racialized employees are publicly coming forward and detailing how their organizations have perpetuated racism against them.

Newsrooms in the US and Canada, for their part, have been forced to acknowledge that they have to do better: in who they hire, who they retain, who gets promoted, what they cover, and how they cover it. This moment has resurrected a question that's haunted me since I returned from Baltimore: How can the media be trusted to report on what Black and other racialized people are facing when it doesn't even believe them?

In many American cities, the protests calling for justice following the killings of Black people like Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor have been met with violent responses from police, who have tear-gassed, chased, shoved, beaten, and arrested protesters and journalists. In May, Omar Jimenez, a Black CNN reporter, was handcuffed and led away by police while the cameras rolled.

Watching the recent police violence against protesters unfold reminded me of how my interview with the two men in Baltimore had ended. It was 10 p.m., meaning the city-wide curfew was now in effect, and we were standing just outside a subway station in the Penn North neighbourhood. Lonnie Moore, the young Black man who had first approached me, had just left. I was putting my recorder away when police came rushing into the block. They told us we had to leave. We tried to enter a nearby subway station, but a police officer blocked the entrance. We tried to turn down a side street, but another officer told us we couldn't go that way either. We tried every escape we could think of, but we were boxed in.

Suddenly, one officer began charging at us, his baton out, swinging, shoving Jarrod Jones and cursing at him. We ran away from him as fast as we could, my bag with my recording equipment bouncing clumsily behind me.

None of this made it to air. I had made the rookie mistake of turning off my radio recorder as soon as the interview ended. But I probably would not have worked it into the documentary anyway; as a journalist, you want to avoid becoming part of the story. One of the core elements of journalism is for reporters to maintain a distance from those they cover, which is meant to provide a sense of objectivity. For many white journalists, that distance is built in to their very life experiences. But, for many other journalists, there is no distance between what happened

to George Floyd and what could have happened to them. Distance is a luxury.

When I got back to Toronto, I told my deskmates about my time in Baltimore in hushed tones. I felt at the time that to speak of it more openly would somehow implicate me, that my story could be seen through the lens of advocacy instead of hard-and-fast reporting. I also knew you never want to end up on the wrong side of police, especially as a racialized person, and leave it up to others to decide how your actions may have justified violence against you.

In journalism, as in predominantly white societies at large, questioning police narratives is complicated. "The police play a very powerful role in defining what the nature and extent of crime is in our society," says Julius Haag, a criminologist and associate professor of sociology at the University of Toronto's Mississauga campus. "Police also recognize that they have a powerful role in shaping public perceptions, and they use that ability within the media to help…legitimize their purpose and their responses."

A. Dwight Pettit, a Baltimore-based lawyer I interviewed for my documentary in 2015, told me something about why police accounts are rarely questioned by the media that stayed with me. Juries seem to have trouble confronting the violence in police-brutality cases, he said, because so often, people have grown up seeing police doing right by them and have trusted police with their safety. This is especially true for white people, who are less likely to be treated unfairly by police. Putting police on trial would be asking people to challenge their lifelong beliefs.

Anthony N. Morgan, a racial-justice lawyer in Toronto, says this same dynamic plays out in Canada in both "obvious and indirect ways." Racialized people can tell you about water cooler conversations they've had with white colleagues about racism they've experienced and witnessed, which "often end up in the 'Did that really happen? What were they doing? Maybe we need to see more of the video?' territory," he says. "These kinds of frankly absurd ways of justifying and excusing murder or harm done to Black and Indigenous people play out in society more generally, and I think they play out in journalism too."

On may 27, a twenty-nine-year-old Black Indigenous woman named Regis Korchinski-Paquet fell from a twenty-fourth floor balcony in Toronto while police were in her unit responding to the family's call for help with a mental health crisis. Police were the only ones there during the fall, and questions about the moments before her death remain unanswered. The tragedy has also boosted calls from racialized journalists to challenge the media's overreliance on police narratives.

It wasn't until the next day that media reports included any of her family members' voices or began questioning the role of police in Korchinski-Paquet's death. Not because the family didn't want to talk to the media: the family's social media posts are what had raised initial awareness about Korchinski-Paquet's death. One journalist described arriving at the scene to talk to family members and seeing other reporters there. (This gap in the reporting may have stemmed from some family members' initial social media posts, which effectively accused the police of killing Korchinski-Paquet and would have been impossible to independently verify at the time. The family's lawyer later clarified their initial statements, saying they believed police actions may have played a role in Korchinski-Paquet's death.)

Instead, the very first news stories about Korchinski-Paquet's death were based solely on a statement from the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), the civilian-oversight agency in Ontario that is automatically called to investigate circumstances involving police that have resulted in death, serious injury, or allegations of sexual assault. (The SIU has since cleared the police officers involved of any criminal offence.) Some journalists asked their newsrooms and organizations to explain why early coverage excluded the family's narrative. I know one journalist whose editor questioned her for reporting what the family had told her in the early hours.

Korchinski-Paquet's death is just the latest reminder of why some journalists have long been arguing that police versions of events—whether their own actions or the actions of those they police—should be subject to the same levels of scrutiny other powerful bodies garner, and that their accounts cannot be relied on as the only source. "The police are not, in and of themselves, objective observers of things," said Wesley Lowery—who was part of a *Washington Post* team that won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of fatal shootings by police officers—in a *Longform Podcast* interview in June. "They are political and government entities who are the literal characters in the story."

Nor do police watchdogs offer a sufficient counternarrative. The SIU has long been plagued with concerns about its power and credibility. Former Ontario ombudsman André Marin released a 2008 report stating that Ontario's system of police oversight has failed to live up to its promise due to a "complacent" culture and a lack of rigour in ensuring police follow the rules. More recently, the limited powers of the SIU have been made clear in the aftermath of the fatal shooting of D'Andre Campbell, a twenty-six-year-old Black man with schizophrenia, who was shot by a police officer in April after he called the Peel Regional Police for help. So far, that officer has refused to be interviewed by the SIU and has not submitted any notes to the police watchdog—nor can the officer be legally compelled to do so.

In 2018, I would see these obstacles play out in my own reporting. I had helped produce a series of live town halls on racism across the country. The Vancouver edition focused on racism in health care, with one conversation centring the experiences of two Indigenous nurses. Diane Lingren, provincial chair for the Indigenous leadership caucus of the BC Nurses' Union, recounted how she often saw non-Indigenous people who appeared to be intoxicated be "told to settle down, and then they get a cab ride" to an overnight shelter. With Indigenous people, she said, "I see the RCMP called.…I see them handcuff

their ankles to their wrists so they can't walk.... I see those people get taken away in the police cars."

The RCMP denied that account; their response included a statement about their practice of a "bias free policing policy." Based on that statement, the executive producer on the series wanted to cut the Indigenous nurses' anecdotes from the show entirely. (The producer could not be reached for confirmation.) My co-producers and I fought to retain them, to present them along with the RCMP's statement. This shouldn't have been a battle: our very role as journalists is to present all the facts, fairly, with context. But, in many newsrooms, police narratives carry enough weight to effectively negate, silence, and disappear the experiences of racialized people.

That it's racialized journalists who have had to challenge police narratives and counter this tradition is an immense burden—and it's risky. "The views and inclinations of whiteness are accepted as the objective neutral," Wesley Lowery wrote in a June op-ed in the *New York Times*. "When Black and Brown reporters and editors challenge those conventions, it's not uncommon for them to be pushed out, reprimanded, or robbed of new opportunities."

That last point rings entirely too true for me.

In July 2017, I was guest producing on a weekly show for a brief summer stint. One story I produced was an interview with Ahmed Shihab-Eldin, an Emmy-nominated journalist who was in Jerusalem covering protests that had sprung up at the al-Aqsa mosque. Worshippers were praying outside the mosque, instead of inside, in an act of civil disobedience against the installation of metal detectors following the killing of two Israeli police officers by Israeli Arab attackers. In the interview, he explained the source of the tension, what the front lines of the protests looked like, and also touched on press freedom—Shihab-Eldin himself had been stopped, questioned, and jostled by Israeli security forces while he was reporting. From the moment I pitched having him on the show, the acting senior producer showed keen interest in the story. This enthusiasm made what happened next all the more confounding.

We recorded the interview on a Friday. Shortly afterward, that same senior producer told me the segment was being pulled from the show and that she would not have the time to explain why. She had consulted a director, and together they had ultimately decided to kill it. The story never went to air.

I spent a week trying to get an explanation. It wasn't lost on me that the interview would have included criticism of Israeli security forces and that I was coming upon the intersection of two issues here: the media's aversion to criticism of law enforcement coupled with its deeply ingrained reluctance to wade into the conversation about Israel and Palestine, especially if this means critiquing the Israeli government's policies or actions. Bias or one-sidedness shouldn't have been a concern: I had planned on incorporating the Israel Defense Force press office's response. The story couldn't, and wouldn't, have run without it.

In the end, the director, who had been the one to make the final call to not run the interview, wrote an apologetic email to Shihab-Eldin and me, which read, in part: "Our hope was that further work on our end would allow us to give our audiences more context so that they would not leave your interview with unanswered questions. . . . We ran into unexpected difficulties in doing so."

I had heard nothing about the story needing more context, or about questions that the director and senior producer felt were unanswered, before the decision was made. Nor did I have a clear understanding of what these "unexpected difficulties" were. (The senior producer and director say they felt the interview was too opinionated.) For his part, Shihab-Eldin responded to the senior director with: "Unfortunately I'm all too familiar with 'unexpected difficulties'."

It was the first and only time in my ten years of journalism that a story was pulled—let alone without an open editorial discussion or transparency. And I did not realize just how much this experience would mark me and my future in this profession.

To be a journalist in any media organization or newsroom is to navigate the crush of the daily news cycle; the relentlessness of deadlines; and the pressure, care, and complexity it takes to craft a story well. To be a racialized journalist is to navigate that role while also walking a tightrope: being a professional journalist and also bringing forward the stories that are perhaps not on the radar of the average newsroom but are close to home for many of us. And it takes a toll.

The stories I've recounted are the ones that stood out the most over my ten years in journalism. There are countless other, smaller fights that took place. When asked to comment for this article, Chuck Thompson, head of public affairs at the CBC, wrote in an email: "We are actively reviewing our journalistic standards to ensure we are interpreting policies and practices through a more inclusive lens.... It is just one of several recommitments we have made including hiring more Black, Indigenous and people of colour within our teams but also into leadership positions. We can point to a half dozen recent hires and promotions that show that pledge to do better, is both authentic and genuine." His email also referenced existing initiatives, such as the CBC's Developing Emerging Leaders Program, "which identifies and trains people of colour, as well as Black and Indigenous people, who are indeed taking their rightful place at our leadership tables." (I am a graduate of the inaugural cohort of that program.)

Diversity is a feel-good term that is often held up as a goal and priority by industries from media to law to academia and beyond. It's supposed to be the antidote to the experiences I've described and a signal that employers value and seek a range of perspectives, backgrounds, world views, and experiences that run the spectrum of age, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, race, and ability. If that feels like a massive umbrella of goals and classifications, that's because it is.

Just take a look at any Canadian newsroom, even in Toronto, a city that is over 50 percent nonwhite. As a starting point, our newsrooms do not reflect the world

outside of them—which does not bode well for accurately representing the breadth of stories playing out every day. As a result, from the second so many racialized journalists walk into news organizations, we are still often the Only Ones in the Room. And, where there are racialized journalists at all, there are even fewer Black and Indigenous journalists. As you go higher up the ladder of these organizations, it's not long before Black, Indigenous, and racialized journalists aren't in the room at all. Meanwhile, news organizations regularly see our mere presence in their newsrooms as successful examples of so-called diversity even if our roles are overwhelmingly junior and precarious.

This setup often ends up placing the responsibility on the Only Ones in the Room to guarantee a spectrum of experiences and stories in news coverage and to point out where coverage misses the mark, including when there is a story involving the actions of police. The responsibility is heavy.

It's a dynamic that Asmaa Malik, an associate professor at Ryerson University's school of journalism, sees playing out regularly. Her research focuses on race and Canadian media as well as on the role of diversity in news innovation. "There's an idea in many Canadian newsrooms that, if you have one person who checks the box, then you're covered," she says. "So the burden that puts on individual journalists is huge."

Everyone who's been the Only One in the Room knows what it's like. The silence that falls when a story about racism is pitched. The awkward seat shifting. The averted stares. We've felt it, and internalized it, and expected it. We know that there is often an unspoken higher burden of proof for these stories than for others, a problem that has long been exacerbated by the fact that race-based data is rarely collected in policing, health care, and other fields. Yet it is on us to fill this void and "prove" the existence of racism. As a result, we overprepare those pitches. We anticipate your questions. We get used to having the lives of our friends and families and the people who look like them discounted, played devil's advocate to, intellectualized from a sanitized distance.

A long-time producer at a major news organization, a Black woman whose name I agreed not to use because of fear for her job security, bristled at the suggestion that to cover stories that hit close to home, including anti-Black racism, police brutality, and the Black Lives Matter movement, is to somehow engage in advocacy. "There seems to be the assumption that we cannot coexist with the journalistic standards of being fair and balanced and impartial. Really, what we are fighting for, what we've always been fighting for, is just the truth."

The language of diversity and inclusion ends up feeling like we are being invited to the table as guests, but there are conditions to keeping our seats.

In the meantime, when race and racism feature heavily in headlines, we are relied on to become sensitivity readers for our organizations, suddenly asked if things can be run past us or whether the show is hitting the right marks or whether we can connect other journalists to racialized communities and sources that are harder to reach. "This is in addition to the regular reporting that we do day-to-day. There's just a level of work that goes unseen and unacknowledged," the producer told me. "And the future of our institutions depends on us doing the work."

Under the banner of diversity, we are told to bring ourselves and our perspectives. But, if we bring too much of them, we are marked and kept back.

In 2018, I applied to a senior editorial position after completing the CBC's Developing Emerging Leaders Program, only to be told I needed more training. I ended up taking on this role for nine months anyway, to fill in for a maternity leave. After that stint, in a meeting with a manager in which I expressed wanting to take on more leadership opportunities, I was told that I had to bide my time. (The manager remembers discussing other job opportunities but does not recall this part of the conversation.) At this point, I'd been at the organization for ten years, eight of which were at the specific show whose senior leadership I was applying for. The writing was on the wall for me. I left the organization less than two months later.

For many of us, that kind of coded language—about needing more training, about biding our time—is proof that we will never be deemed qualified enough to lead the news that is often not made with us in mind, as audiences or as creators. In June, Kim Wheeler, an Anishinabe/Mohawk reporter, took to Twitter to write that she had left her job at the CBC after a network manager said she would never be a senior producer at the show she worked on. A Black producer described regularly being asked to fill more senior roles, but only on a temporary basis.

It was only after I left my job that someone who had been on the hiring committee for the senior editorial role told me the reason I had been turned down. The director who had decided not to run the 2017 interview from Jerusalem had also been part of the hiring committee and had expressed concerns that I was biased and therefore should not be promoted, an opinion shared by some of the other committee members. And that was that.

There's no way of knowing this with absolute certainty, but I can't help but imagine how things might have been different if the hiring committee, which had been made up of predominantly white women, had had another set of eyes, experiences, and world views. The presence of someone else in that room might have challenged the notion that I was biased.

"Diversity" is a word that's held up as a solution to the obvious gaps and inequities in media and other industries—in its most generous and naive interpretation, it's supposed to encapsulate my experience, and yours, and hers, and his, and all of ours. Instead, the language

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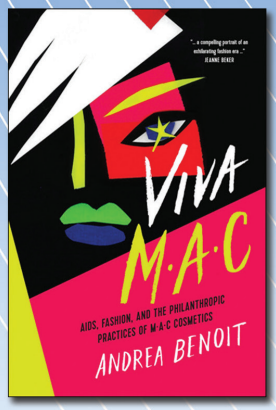

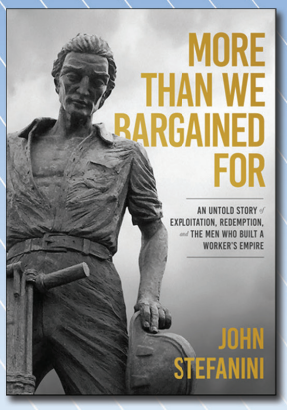

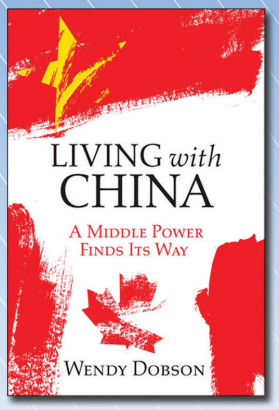

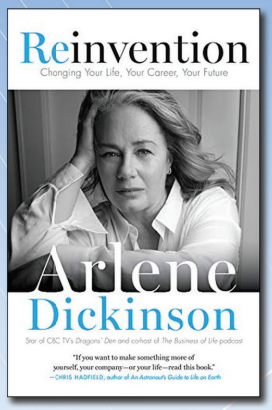

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of diversity and inclusion, to us, ends up feeling like we are being invited to the table as guests, but there are conditions to keeping our seats. Shake that table just a little bit, and you'll soon find that your invitation has been rescinded.

Many racialized journalists have had enough with the diversity talk. It's long been clear that Black, Indigenous, and other racialized people must be at the forefront of the change in leadership that newsrooms so desperately need—at the decision-making tables, with enough power and security to sit in their seats comfortably, shake the tables, or flip them entirely.

ON AN UNUSUALLY HOT, still day in June, while the world was in the early stages of the reckoning that remains underway, I sat with four women, all Black journalist friends of mine, on my back patio. Many of us had been fielding "Are you okay? Thinking of you" texts, phone calls, and emails for the past week and consulting one another on how to respond, if at all. We sat outside and talked as the sun set. It had been two weeks at least since we had been furiously keeping in touch in a frantic group chat, trying to keep abreast of all the world's events and the shifting media landscape, but this was the first time I'd seen them in months, given the pandemic. We talked, ate, raged, commiserated, ranted, shared, and had tea until almost midnight. As it got dark, I brought out candles and looked at my friends' faces in the glow. Everyone was so tired, so spent, so on edge, but so happy to see one another. The furrowed brows gave way to laughter, calm, relief.

We dreamt of what it would be like if we all got to work together. We dreamt, naively, about creating our own news organizations. We dreamt, perhaps more realistically, about getting to do the work we wanted to do in newsrooms that are truly reflective of the worlds we live in.

It reminded me of what the Black producer whose name I agreed not to use had told me: "It feels like such a weight to just make sure that the coverage we are doing on race and racism is good. We don't have the luxury of pitching things that are just meant to bring us joy."

It's true. There is so much more to us, if only there were space. There's so much more we want to talk about, so much more we want to do. But the burden is now on the Canadian media industry and its leaders to enable that work instead of questioning it. To get out of the way so it can happen.

Many of us have long been lectured to about journalistic standards and practices: verification, balance, objectivity, and accuracy. I find it ironic. In an industry that loves to talk to its racialized employees about accuracy when we pitch and cover experiences that mirror ours, what's become clear is that media organizations themselves have failed these tests of accuracy. Their very existence and makeup has long been an inaccurate reflection of the world we live in. The accuracy problem was never ours to fix. It's time newsrooms admitted that they regret the error and put real work into correcting a historical mistake. ☑

PACINTHE MATTAR is a writer and producer in Toronto. Her work has appeared in *Buzzfeed*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Toronto Life*.

PROFILE

David Frum Fights the Right

Canada's most controversial conservative export on the future of the Republican Party and his fears for the US election

BY CURTIS GILLESPIE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLAY RODERY

On the evening of November 2, 2018, a Munk Debate took place at Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall arguing the proposition that the future of Western politics is populist, not liberal. As the beginning drew near, protests erupted in front of the venue because the organizers had chosen Steve Bannon—architect of the Trump campaign, former leader of the alt-right Breitbart empire, Svengali to apprenticing authoritarians, and the world's foremost proponent of the slept-in blazer—to argue on behalf of populism. But commentators were also aghast at the person tasked with defending the values of classical liberalism: David Frum. Yes, that David Frum: the Axis of Evil neocon who served in the George W. Bush White House, boisterously supported the Iraq War, and authored a handful of books advocating hardline conservative policies.

Not, in other words, the kind of CV that shouts out "defender of liberal values." "When it's left to David Frum to hold the line against Steve Bannon…" Naomi Klein tweeted, "these Munk Debates are a disgrace."

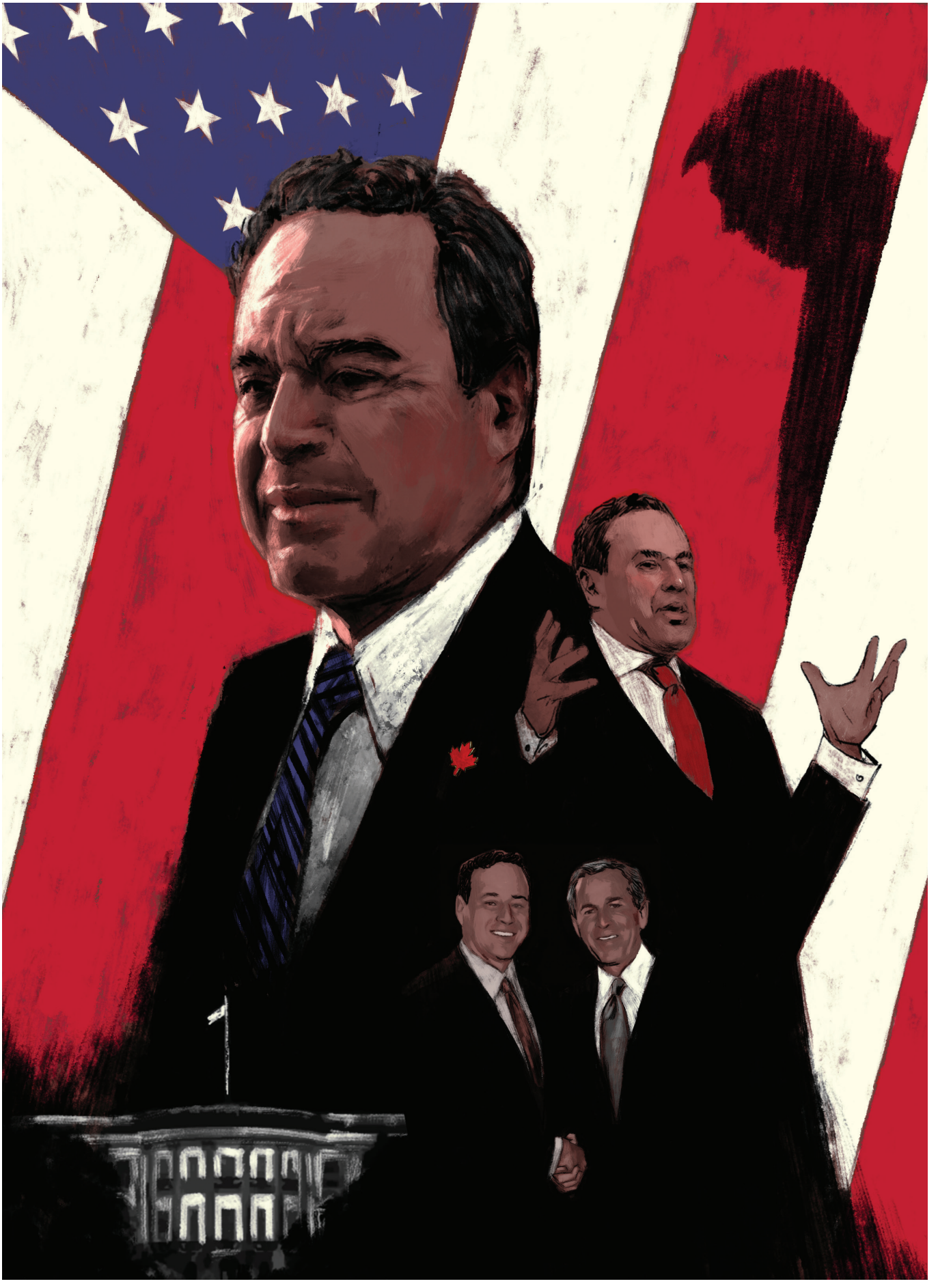
The event was held up for over half an hour due to the commotion outside the entrance. There were some minor skirmishes, multiple arrests. Inside, someone unveiled a banner that read, "No hate. No bigotry. No place for Bannon's white supremacy." Bannon grinned at the spectacle. Frum sat, patient and bemused. Once underway, the moderator began to explain the scoring method. The crowd would vote now and again at the end of the evening with provided clickers. The debate could finally begin.

As the evening progressed, Bannon found various ways to say that populism was about the people, not about authoritarianism; Frum found various ways to say that liberal democracy was responsible for most of society's major advances of the last three centuries. There was some engagement and the occasional direct rebuttal, but it was mostly a mild affair: two men expressing different world views. There was no animosity, little tension, and in fact, Bannon consistently expressed his admiration for Frum's insight, compliments that were off-putting in their own right. Having Steve Bannon praise your intellect is like having Dracula admire your shirt collar.

After about eighty minutes of speeches, the debate was over. It was up to the audience now. After a few minutes of tabulating the results, the numbers popped up on the giant screen behind the participants. There was an audible gasp. At the beginning of the debate, 72 percent of attendees had disagreed with the proposition that populism would soon supplant liberalism. After they heard both sides, that figure dropped to 57 percent—Frum, defender of liberal democracy, had somehow managed to lose much of the room. Audience members were open mouthed. Frum seemed stunned. Bannon, quite graciously, said, "If we don't convert people of the stature of David Frum into our movement as the public intellectuals, we're not going to have a movement." Frum congratulated Bannon: "As in 2016, the rural vote came in."

It wasn't until later that night, long after the results had rippled through social media, that the Munk team posted a *mea culpa* online. Due to a technical glitch, they had gotten the numbers wrong: 72 percent of the crowd had *still* not supported the proposition. Either way, it remained a win for Bannon—his alt-right acolytes simply claimed another example of the left rewriting history to suit its own ends.

There were many possible conclusions to be drawn from the Munk affair: that, after all the effort, no minds were



changed; that the organizers had lost the data and tried to fudge it; that the whole thing had been a charade anyway since Frum made the mistake of taking the debate seriously whereas Bannon seemed to treat it like a lark. But lost amid the debacle was maybe the most important takeaway of all: the event revealed the nearly complete evolution of David Frum. The man who played as prominent a role in American politics as any Canadian likely ever has—and as a Republican, no less—had returned home to cement the growing understanding that he is no longer a reactionary warmonger (admittedly my own read for many years) but is in fact a thinker of centrist and even certain left-leaning positions: a convert to war skepticism, a proclaimed internationalist, a supporter of universal health care, a believer in same-sex marriage, an upholder of the role of government, and most prominently, one of the few leading Republicans who was willing to pay the price to say, loudly and often, that Donald Trump is a craven, amoral, criminal, empty, narcissistic, inept liar. Which, as the 2020 election season moves into the almost-can't-bear-to-watch phase, makes Frum the most consistent and insightful conservative interpreting what's happening. In fact, other than the immigration file, on which Frum remains something of a restrictionist, it may seem fair to conclude he's now an out-and-out liberal. Which really leaves only one question: How the hell did that happen?

THE CHILDREN of famous parents evolve in various ways. Some retreat entirely, forging private lives. Some struggle to find themselves. Others become minor replicas of their famous progenitors. Then there are those like Frum and his senator sister, Linda, who become parent adjacent, putting down career roots on a different street in the same neighbourhood. Frum's mother, Barbara, died in 1992, at the age of fifty-four, from chronic leukemia. It is probably difficult for a younger audience to properly contextualize the influence and reach she possessed in the later decades of her life. After hosting the CBC Radio program *As It Happens*, which she started doing in 1971, she moved to television in 1982 and hosted *The Journal*, which, following *The National* each night, offered more in-depth reporting and narrative, a kind of daily *60 Minutes*. It was during this period that she became a household figure in Canada, famous for her fearless reporting and professional manner that occasionally allowed for a grin or a chuckle.

But only occasionally. Her persona as a tough interviewer was so entrenched that the Maritime comedy show *Codco* ran a segment, called "The Jugular," in which Greg Malone, impersonating Barbara, interrogated hapless guests so as to draw out their pain and bitterness. She was such a good sport about the joke that she and Malone, in drag as Barbara, presented together at the Gemini Awards one year. Canada's *Sesame Street* even created a Muppet based on her, known as Barbara Plum. She was, in the days when there were few television channels and no widespread internet, not just omnipresent but universally respected in a way that seems impossible in today's takedown culture. It felt appropriate that her memorial was broadcast on CBC TV, as if it were a state affair.

Barbara Frum may have been an icon, but she was also a mother and a wife. It was a strangely splintered upbringing for young David in that he had a famous (and imposing) mother and a wealthy (and genial) real estate developer father, yet death and mortality hung over the house every day. Frum's father, Murray, was born in 1931, the year after his family came to Canada from Poland. The extended family remained behind, and almost every single member, on both sides, was murdered in the Holocaust. And, though hardly anyone knew it at the time, Barbara was first diagnosed with cancer and told she had one or two years to live in 1974, when she was thirty-seven and her son fourteen.

"We had a happy household in so many ways," Frum told me by phone from his home in Washington, DC. "But that sense of things just off to stage left and stage right, of doom and danger around the corner, that was really a formative thing. Barbara had many sayings that we still quote, and one of them was, 'There are those who know and those who don't know,' and what she meant by that was the knowledge of the potential for tragedy in human life, of loss, and just how near the surface loss and suffering are. That statement, which I didn't appreciate enough when I was young, becomes more powerful as you go through life. You wanted to be one of those who knew, not one of those who didn't know."

There were other things Frum felt he came to know. It was in his mid-teens that he had his political "road to Damascus" moment. In the summer of 1975, he got a job working on the election campaign for a Toronto NDP candidate. It was also the summer that his mother gave him a copy of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*. As he trundled back and forth on transit—home to work, work to home—he read the book's devastating indictment of the Soviet Union and its vast prison system. Frum was overtaken by a sense that the westernized left, which he saw as sympathizing with radical movements, had the world wrong. "It had this overpowering effect on me," Frum told *The Nation* in 2012. He finished his placement, but reading Solzhenitsyn's book instigated a reaction against the ideologies of the left, nascent and unformed as his belief still was then.

After high school, Frum went to Yale, where he pursued a simultaneous BA and MA in history. To most, it would seem a peak experience, but Frum doesn't quite remember it that way. "I was clever in the sense of being pretty well-informed and verbally deft but also missing large dimensions of human wisdom. I was a very serious-minded young person. But I lacked things. There are so many things that I should have understood that I didn't."

Such as?

He paused, seemed to prepare an answer, but drew back. "Oh, I don't know. But I was a hard worker. I really wanted to learn. And one of the things that we were all always told, as undergraduates, was that so many of your most valuable experiences here will happen outside of the library. And yet, for me, the most

valuable experiences I had at college mostly happened inside the library."

Following his graduation, he returned to Toronto, where, he said, he spent 1982 to 1984 "floundering." He fell into a young-man-without-a-plan malaise that his mother finally addressed when she told him that, if he couldn't decide on his future, she'd create one for him. Her vision started with law school, which Frum was not keen on. Barbara implored him to take the LSAT. He bought a sample test and scored seven out of twenty-two, which he used as evidence that law school was not in his genes. Dismissing his argument, Barbara took the same test and scored a perfect twenty-two.

"She had such a precise mind, and I guess I interpreted her score as a dare or a challenge, so I took the book back and worked on the sample tests until I could get twenty-two out of twenty-two, at which point, of course, she said I therefore had no excuse not to take the actual test. And then, once you write the actual test, it's an escalator you can't jump off."

He attended Harvard Law School, where he also became more active politically, serving as president of the Federalist Society chapter, a conservative and libertarian law students' group. Upon graduating, he met budding journalist Danielle Crittenden (in 1987, at a party hosted by his mother in their Toronto home). The two got married, and Frum soon joined the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal* and began vigorously inserting himself and his ideas into American politics.

Frum released his first book, 1994's *Dead Right*, halfway into Bill Clinton's first term. It was billed as a young conservative's plan to rejuvenate the Grand Old Party by breaking free from its misguided post-Reagan preoccupations with culture-war targets (race, nationality, sex) and instead focusing on its traditional goals (business, small government, lower taxes). George Will, the éminence grise of the American right, said it was "as slender as a stiletto and as cutting." Frank Rich, writing for the *New York Times*, called it "the smartest book written from the inside about the American conservative movement."

The book marked Frum as an important new voice, especially for his willingness to say things other conservatives didn't particularly want to hear, which became a pattern. During the remainder of the Clinton years, Frum continued to promote a politics focused on policy over ideology, but his was a conservatism that lost momentum as Newt Gingrich became the dominant Republican on Capitol Hill. Gingrich led a nasty and highly partisan rearguard culture war, a good part of which was focused on the morals, or lack thereof, of a Clinton gripped by a sex scandal. (It would later emerge that Gingrich himself was having an affair with a young aide during the same period.) However, when George W. Bush won the 2000 election, he did so after campaigning on a "compassionate conservatism" that distanced itself from Gingrich's bellicose ways. Shortly thereafter, Frum, seemingly vindicated, was invited to join the White House as part of the president's speech-writing team. It was a heady time for a Canadian who'd just had his fortieth birthday and who had moved to Washington from Toronto only in 1996. Frum was not Bush's primary speechwriter—that role fell to Michael Gerson—but he was drafted to offer text on economic issues. It seemed the most enviable of times for a young conservative writer and thinker.

Except for one thing: it was the summer of 2001.

FRUM'S YOUNGEST daughter, Beatrice, was born in December 2001, three months after 9/11. He wrote in *Newsweek*, over a decade later, that his wife had nursed their newborn as F-16s screamed overhead. It was a perilous time for everyone, but especially for someone working in the White House, where staff briefings outlined plans for dealing with biological attacks, car bombings, targeted assassinations, and poisonous gas releases. It was in this fraught atmosphere that president Bush started laying the groundwork for launching the invasion of Iraq, a course of action now widely viewed as strategically flawed and, worse, morally disastrous in that it was based on a lie.

It's been seventeen years since the war began, leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people (if not more). In the intervening years, Frum has many times admitted it was a bad decision, that he would do things differently if he knew then what he knows now. (He does not, however, like to use the word *regret*.) During our conversations, he didn't try to evade culpability by pointing out that his influence in the White House was negligible, that he was a speechwriter, not an adviser. Still, whether he was an adviser or a hired pen, whether his role was lead or minor, his part in shaping the Iraq War narrative has defined him ever since, for one reason primarily.

One day in late 2001, Frum was at work in the White House when Gerson

came in and asked him to assist with the Iraq sections of the upcoming State of the Union speech. He posed the assignment as a "what if"—what might the president say about Iraq and the current state of global affairs if he were to pursue this or that course of action. Frum told me that everything he wrote was "in the conditional," meaning that, as he was writing it, he believed he was spitballing. Frum originally wrote that Iran, Iraq, and North Korea comprised an "axis of hatred." Gerson and fellow speechwriter Matthew Scully apparently liked the phrase and made a small adjustment. After Frum had delivered his notes and wordsmithing to Gerson, he was effectively out of the loop, which was why it came as a shock to him, as he and his wife were watching the speech on TV later in January, when Bush started railing about the Axis of Evil.

The phrase immediately became a flashpoint among both allies and enemies in the US and around the world. It was a succinct encapsulation of the Republican state of mind post-9/11, a pithy string of code that reinforced the long-simmering conflict as an urgent moral crusade.

Axisgate soon followed, wherein Crittenden sent an email to family and friends—one that *Slate* intercepted and published that February. "My husband is responsible for the 'Axis of Evil' segment of Tuesday's State of the Union address. It's not often a phrase one writes gains national notice," Crittenden wrote. "So I'll hope you'll indulge my wifely pride in seeing this one repeated in headlines everywhere!!" The leak created a gossipy stir in the Georgetown cocktail-party circuit, but setting aside the unfortunate obliviousness of the email and the criticism it brought the family, the episode gave Frum an air of celebrity and cemented the image that he was deep inside the Republican machine. This was an astonishing ascendancy. If you were a right-winger, Frum's work may have seemed like the ascent of a thinker and writer to his rightful place. Those to the left might have considered him not just a traitor to his country but to his mother's legacy.

Frum's time in the White House did not last long, however. He told me there were many reasons for leaving. One particular area of concern was his disagreement with the president's high steel tarrifs. "I wanted to shift from speechwriting—and political communication generally—to domestic policy work," he explained. (Others, including writers in the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*, speculated that Frum was pushed out of the White House for his wife's email indiscretion.) Whatever the reason, Frum took his leave that February and joined the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a right-wing think tank.

Though out, Frum appeared to remain an insider. He quickly wrote a hawkish book, with Iraq War architect Richard Perle, which proclaimed the necessity of American global hegemony. This was followed by *The Right Man*, an account of the Bush presidency arguing that, whatever one thought of his record, the man himself was admirable. If Frum harboured hunger pangs, wanting to bite the hand that fed him and expand on his earlier project of examining the fault lines within the conservative movement, he hid them, at least for a few years.

Toward the end of the Bush era, he published *Comeback: Conservatism That Can Win Again*. It came on the heels of the Republicans losing Congress in 2006 but before Barack Obama's rise. The book was significant for Frum because it recast him on an intellectual course rather than a policy one. Much like his *Dead Right* debut, *Comeback* argued that the right had lost its way and needed a major reset. Since Reagan, conservative ideology had held that the only way to make small government better was to make it even smaller and that the only good tax was a lowered tax. Frum contradicted both of these shibboleths. He also proclaimed his support for a carbon tax and, later, voiced his support for gay marriage. "The party needed to reinvent itself for the twenty-first century," Frum told me. "The Cold War gave shape to Republican ideology for a generation. The party wandered until 9/11, when it seemed that Islamic terrorism would take the ideological place, as it were, of the Cold War. Obviously, the terror attacks were a terrible thing and they called for a response, but you couldn't reorganize your whole politics around foreign terrorism. To some degree, I was part of that. But it was just wrong."

The approach outlined in *Comeback* offered the GOP a set of ideas to rally around, to which it said, Thanks, but no thanks. Not only did the party reject the kind of regeneration Frum was advocating, but it also seemed to double down on the same kind of unreconstructed hyperbole and hysteria that surrounded the Iraq War. The path the Republican Party followed led to the continued growth of Fox News, the creation of the Tea Party, and, ultimately, the emergence of Donald Trump. It also led to the excommunication of David Frum.

It would be an insult to true explorers to describe a man with a cushy post at a high-profile think tank as wandering in the woods, but nevertheless, after Obama entered the White House, in early 2009, Frum's profile was as low as it had ever been. Yes, he was still publishing here and there, and he was no doubt engaged in some arcane political activity at the AEI, but he was standing on the edge of the dance floor. This interstitial period gave him time to ponder where he was going with his writing and his career, reflections that inevitably led back to growing up in the Frum household. The harsh truths of mortality may have been ever-present as Frum was growing up, but so too was intense political and intellectual engagement. Frum remembers his mother as a serious-minded person, and he describes her influence on him as "limitless." I asked him what it was like to evolve as a thinker in his own right, moving to the right of the spectrum, knowing his mother was such a famous upholder of liberal causes.

"People say, 'You and your mother had such different politics,' and that's not exactly right because my mother didn't have politics the way people who have politics have them. She was a profoundly nonideological person," he said, adding that his mother was someone who took every issue, every conversation, every

point of debate at face value, starting at zero every time. She never approached an idea with a preset ideological bent. Frum shared this anecdote almost wistfully, as if part of him wished he had the capacity, or the opportunity, to do the same. "One of the reasons I so desperately miss the opportunity to talk to her is, with most people I know, even the most brilliant intellects, I might not be able to guess all the insights they would bring to a question, but I would know approximately what they would say. I know approximately what Chris Hitchens would say about Donald Trump. I can't imagine the jokes he would make and the sparkling witticisms and the particular insights and details—that's why we miss him—but I know approximately where he'd be." Barbara was different. "What she taught us was not what to think but how to think. She was outside of all ideological categories, a profound analytical intelligence. And incredibly morally sensitive and morally demanding, of herself above all. I learned that from her, how to do that."

These values were sorely tested during the Obama years. Although he was firmly seated at the AEI, Frum was already standing in uncertain relationship to the conservative movement. He respected Obama but did not support many of his more activist social policies, yet neither did Frum believe the GOP was positioning itself to appeal to most Americans. In March 2010, as Obama was signing the Affordable Care Act into legislation, Frum published on his website an essay titled "Waterloo," in which he stated that, far from Obamacare being a Waterloo for the president, it would be the undoing of the GOP because the party failed to see that it was what Americans wanted. He made the case that the right should stop politicizing something that was good for the country and do its best to make the program better and more conservative-friendly. Republicans, he wrote, "followed the most radical voices in the party and the movement, and they led us to abject and irreversible defeat." He rebuked Fox and conservative commentators for lying about health care and stoking a culture war. Rush Limbaugh said that he wanted president Obama to fail, wrote Frum, though "what he omitted to say—but what is equally true—is that he also wants Republicans to fail. If Republicans succeed—if they govern successfully in office and negotiate attractive compromises out of office—Rush's listeners get less angry. And if they are less angry, they listen to the radio less, and hear fewer ads for Sleepnumber beds."

The firestorm was immediate. The essay drew over a million views, crashing his site. Frum was castigated by fellow conservatives and, days later, fired from the AEI. Years afterward, writing in *The Atlantic*, he remembered how, because of that essay, "old friends grew suspicious and drifted away" and that he heard second- and third-hand "echoes of unpleasant explanations for my deviation from the ever-radicalizing main line of Washington conservatism. Increasingly isolated and frustrated, I watched with dismay as people I'd known for years and decades incited each other to jump together over the same cliff." That essay, he wrote, was effectively his "suicide note in the organized conservative world."

Many on the hard right loathe Frum, partly for the content of his criticism and partly because he broke ranks.

DURING THE EARLY YEARS of the first Obama term, it seemed like both the left and the right were wondering precisely what was happening to David Frum. "As the Tea Party has come to dominate the GOP, Frum has been transformed in a remarkably short period of time from right-wing royalty to apostate," wrote Michelle Goldberg for *Tablet* in 2011. "His writing, once aggressive and hyper-confident…now seems elegiac."

"I'm sure you've heard the saying that, if you want a friend in Washington, get a dog," Frum told Goldberg. "I have three dogs."

In 2012, Frum went on to publish a book about Mitt Romney's defeat, and two years later, he found the home that would effectively launch him on his current trajectory, that of senior editor at *The Atlantic*. From that platform, he has continued his mission to goad the conservative movement to adopt a less ideological and more centrist space. He has chronicled his intellectual evolution: about same-sex marriage, the environmental movement, the value of effective government, universal health care, and the nature of military conflict. He has never apologized for his prowar positions, but he's expressed some remorse, to varying degrees, about certain hawkish stances he took in his Bush years.

If many were curious about the precise nature of Frum's working political philosophy toward the end of the Obama administration, those questions would soon be erased. Not long after Donald Trump walked down that escalator in June 2015 and announced he was running for president of the United States, Frum initiated his impassioned, comprehensive, and nearly all-consuming exploration of his contempt for the man who, he tweeted two years later, was "the worst human being ever to enter the presidency, and I include all the slaveholders."

The depth of his investigation into the amorality of not just Trump but Trumpism has clarified and intensified his sense of what politics ought to be about. It has produced some of his best and most compelling writing. It also may have consigned him to post-Trump irrelevance within the Republican Party.

In a seminal essay in *The Atlantic*, published on May 31, 2016, titled "The Seven Broken Guardrails of Democracy," Frum outlined his major oppositional stand to Trump, who had then all but secured the Republican nomination. Read today, the essay is notable for its fury and predictive accuracy. "Here's the part of the 2016 story that will be hardest to explain after

it's all over," Frum wrote. "Trump did not deceive anyone…all of them knew, by the time they made their decisions, that Trump lied all the time, about everything. They knew that Trump was ignorant, and coarse, and boastful, and cruel. They knew he habitually sympathized with dictators and kleptocrats—and that his instinct when confronted with criticism of himself was to attack, vilify, and suppress. They knew his disrespect for women, the disabled, and ethnic and religious minorities. They knew that he wished to unravel NATO and other U.S.-led alliances, and that he speculated aloud about partial default on American financial obligations. None of that dissuaded or deterred them."

He went on to describe it as baffling and sinister that any of his conservative friends were even considering voting for Trump, let alone publicly going over to the dark side, yet many did. "Whatever the outcome in November," he wrote, "conservatives and Republicans will have brought a catastrophe upon themselves, in violation of their own stated principles and best judgment."

It was the start of what has become the overriding theme of Frum's work, in articles and books, over the last four years and counting: to detail both the ways in which Donald Trump is individually corrupt and the ways in which Trumpism has peeled back the dressing to reveal the suppurating sore that is the Republican Party.

Ross Douthat is a columnist with the *New York Times* and, in many ways, may be his generation's Frum—an idealist trying to think his way toward a refreshed classical conservatism. He told me by phone earlier this summer that he'd been reading and learning from Frum since *Dead Right*, though he did not always agree with him. Right from the start, Douthat said, Frum saw Trump as an urgent threat and argued that working with him, attempting the incrementalism of reforming the man by degrees, was not going to save the party. "I thought some of his attacks on the GOP were over the top or counterproductive," said Douthat. "He thought that the infrastructure of conservatism was rotten and you couldn't just renew it from within. You had to confront the rot. I think the rise and success of Donald Trump suggests that David was more right about the scale of the rot than we were."

Frum has written hundreds of thousands of words since his "Guardrails" essay, but what unites them all is how deeply offended he is by Trump. There is a faint melancholy there, a wish for the good old days when people could argue about ideas and rail against the injustices of this or that policy as opposed to having to continuously document the race to the bottom. There are no high roads or low roads. Every road leads to Trump, and all are cratered, muddy, dangerous thoroughfares to a destination not worth getting to. His first book devoted to the president, 2018's *Trumpocracy*, was essentially an analysis of how Trump happened. *Trumpocalypse*, published this May, is a strategy for erasing the stain. Frum seems to be feeling the stress: he wrote wearily in *Trumpocalypse* that "we have to believe this shameful episode will end soon…Over the past four years, I have thought and spoken and written about Donald Trump almost more than I can bear."

Not everyone has been particularly sympathetic. William Voegeli, a senior editor of the *Claremont Review of Books* and noted conservative commentator, told me that, "at some point, if you want followers, if you want somebody, somewhere, to be on your side, then you have to make clear what that side is. David has been better, more vigorous about what he's against than what he's for. There are just so many ways that even a gifted writer can say Donald Trump is a bad president. I've found it harder and harder to figure out where David actually stands, if indeed he still considers himself a conservative."

That's a polite way of saying what others are saying less politely. Many on the hard right loathe Frum, partly for the content of his criticism and partly because he broke ranks. Fox News host Greg Gutfeld, in a June tweet, wrote, "Frum woke one day, a zero; a failed, bitter scold whose desire to be loved thwarted by events. now, all he does is fume. thinkers find him sad & discuss it openly. He's the old neighbor who shouts thru the walls cuz his life, and yours, passed him by." Tucker Carlson, also of Fox, announced on air: "The awfulness of David Frum may be the only thing the left and right agree on in this country." (He's not wrong. From a review of *Trumpocracy* in socialist magazine *Jacobin*: "as an account of how and why Trump came to be, let alone what can be done to resist him, *Trumpocracy* fails in almost every respect…the hypocrisy of its author proves impossible to ignore.")

"I think he's definitely a man without a home," Douthat told me. "He's more alienated from what conservatism is right now than I am and than a lot of people who opposed Trump in 2016 but who have stayed squarely on the right are. There's definitely a form of liberalism that he would be totally comfortable in. It's just unclear whether it exists as a force within liberalism today. I think," Douthat concluded, "that David is one of the more betwixt-and-between figures."

Around the same time that Frum squared off against Bannon at the 2018 Munk Debate, he published an essay in *The Atlantic*, titled "The Republican Party Needs to Embrace Liberalism," in which he called for a new brand of Republicanism. "In a democratic society, conservatism and liberalism are not really opposites. They are different facets of the common democratic creed," he wrote. "What conservatives are conserving, after all, is a liberal order." He expanded upon those comments during one of our conversations. "In the North American context," he said, "it's not like conservatives are conserving the Inquisition. They're not conserving kingship. The conservatives are part of a liberal tradition in North America."

At one point near the end of our communications, I asked him whether, given the overall tenor of his policy positions, it had ever occurred to him that he might be a liberal stuck in the body of a conservative.

He did not respond.

As we move toward November 3, Frum does not believe Trump has a chance of winning, but that doesn't mean he thinks the election will be peaceful. "It's going to be a very scary and unstable time," he said. "And,

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of course, it doesn't end in November. We're not safe until January. He will try to cause as much chaos as he can on his way to losing, and then after he loses, he will pardon criminal associates, he will try to pardon himself, he will move money to himself, and he will try to leave behind as poisoned an environment as possible."

But what if he wins? I asked. What if he legally, legitimately wins? Then it's full crisis mode, Frum said, not just for America but for the world. "Scorched earth. My God, it'll be gruesome. It'll be a sign that the American democratic system has been truly corrupted because, if he wins, he will win despite a big majority of the country being against him. So it will be a win either through massive voter suppression or a massively unfair outcome in the electoral college. How do you even talk about this being a democratic system of government anymore?"

I put it to Frum that, though he is considered a key conservative thinker, he might actually be more on the outside than he's ever been. The blunt reality is that, as a former warmonger, he will never be embraced by the left, and he is now loathed by the right as an apostate. There is no centre.

"I think I'm a pessimist by temperament and an optimist by opinion," he told me. "Or at least I try to be. And it is probably true that my first assessment of any situation is the pessimistic one, and then I ask myself what my father would say, and then I try to talk myself into the more optimistic view." Despite everything, he actually feels quite good about the world these days, mostly because, he explained, the various upheavals have instigated "movements of social and moral change, outside the political system, outside the party system, that I think are inspiring people to be better people."

I asked him what he actually thought he was achieving by criticizing his party and calling out the hollowness of its leadership, not just in the Trump years but effectively since the twilight of the second Bush term. What's the plan, the point, the endgame? Surely the goal is not to seek alienation from every point on the political compass, not to mention a chunk of his personal and professional peer group. He thought about that for a minute.

"Life is like a hike through a really overgrown trail, and you're so busy not falling off the cliff, so busy pushing aside the branches. But, every once in a while, there's a break, and you get a wider vista. I remember Bill Buckley gave an interview in 1970," he said of the leading thinker who often railed against the anti-intellectual strain of the Republican Party, "in which somebody asked him, What do you think you're doing? And he said, I'm trying to maintain a landing strip in the jungle. Someday the planes will appear, and we'll be waiting for them." Frum went on to describe a recent family dinner where his career choices were a topic. "We were talking about some of our friends who have gone over to the Fox News side. And there's a lot of money to be made over there. I was being teased, 'Are you quite sure about all of this?' Part of it is my nature: I just don't think it's in me to have done that."

I asked him if he thought his mother would have respected him if he'd made that leap.

"No, she would not," he said immediately. "Boy, would she not have."

Maybe the long game, then, is the only one left to play, the only one that might someday put Frum and his philosophy back at the heart of the matter. I asked him if he ever saw himself working in government again. "I don't think about it," he said. "Over the past twenty years, I've come to use the word *useful* as a compliment more and more often. I want to be useful. I think it's also that I have a sense of other periods of my life when I did things that were not useful." He thought about it for a second longer. "And I've got a kind of karmic debt to the universe that has to be paid back." ←

CURTIS GILLESPIE has won seven National Magazine Awards and lives in Edmonton.

CULTURE

Forever Homesick

Many of us never stop missing the place we call home

BY MELISSA GISMONDI
ILLUSTRATIONS BY HADI MADWAR

You could say it started with a Venn diagram and a miniature Zen garden. The garden was in the corner of a counsellor's office at the University of California Davis's student health centre and had a little rake you could run through a plot of sand to ease away your stress. It was the fall of 2012, and I had recently relocated from my home, in Oakville, in the Greater Toronto Area, to Davis, a small college town outside of Sacramento, for a graduate program in American history. In the few months since I'd moved there, I had spent a lot of time crying and not much time sleeping. It wasn't that my courses were difficult or that I wasn't enjoying them. I felt, as I told the counsellor, "trapped." I wanted to go home, but with a fellowship and a place in the school's PhD program, I knew I had to stay. Dragging a rake through fake sand wouldn't change that.

The counsellor offered me some reference sheets about stress and anxiety. One included a Venn diagram that was meant to encourage me to think about the things in my life I could control, the things in my life I couldn't, and the things that fell somewhere in between. The counsellor talked about the importance of finding a balance and occupying that middle section where you acknowledge your agency but accept your lot. When our allotted time was up, I took the sheets home, but I didn't go back.

I would spend five more years in the US before returning to Canada for a short stint after graduate school. It was only a year later, when I moved to Virginia, that I realized I'd been suffering from homesickness. This time, my move was predicated upon a job opportunity that seemed impossible to refuse. It was stable, it was salaried, it was a promotion, and it was in an industry I wanted to work in. Because I had no desire to leave home again, I told myself the move was temporary and I hoped the experience, in the American market no less, would help me score the ideal job back in Toronto.

I made arrangements to see a counsellor as soon as I arrived in Virginia. I told her I hadn't wanted to leave home. She asked how I would feel about going back, but I said I'd made a commitment to myself to get through the next year; leaving any earlier would feel like giving up. I'd gotten used to blaming myself when sadness and loneliness cropped up while living abroad. I would remind myself that I'd chosen to leave home and that having had the opportunity to do so was a privilege. Whatever I was going through, I should have been able to snap out of it.

The counsellor didn't necessarily agree with me but instead spoke plainly and simply about how leaving home was hard. She told me how she'd struggled with homesickness after moving to the US from Europe. She talked about missing specific foods at certain times of the year and the anxiety that can be induced by the simplest of social situations or daily tasks: What time do I arrive for dinner? What does one bring to a picnic? She told me how meaningful it was when, out of the blue, someone said to her, "You know, I never noticed this before, but it's hard work fitting in."

These words resonated with me, though it felt ridiculous to admit it. After all, how hard was it for me—a white English-speaking Canadian—to fit in to American society and culture? Although I blended in, the fact of the matter was that Virginia simply wasn't home. It wasn't just that I missed things I couldn't find there, like Kraft peanut butter or the briskness that settles into the air on a late-August evening. Really, I missed what was familiar because it felt safe. Sitting there, in the counsellor's sun-soaked office, I realized just how homesick I was and how homesick I'd been in the past.

Although the experience is, to one degree or another, universal, homesickness is often trivialized as a predictable emotion for kids at sleepovers and summer camps. But the increasingly globalized, itinerant world we live in points to a question about why that is. Homesickness is arguably more widespread and acute than ever. We're living in an age of unprecedented mobility, when millions leave their homes every year, some perhaps pursuing relationships or careers, many forced out by war or natural disasters. At a time when the very planet we live on is transforming into an unfamiliar place, our sense of home—and what it means to miss it—may be challenged at its core. For all the intimacy we humans have

had with homesickness throughout history, the one thing it seems we haven't done is understand where it fits into our lives today and, perhaps more radically, accept it.

Mark leary, professor emeritus of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University, has described homesickness as emotional stress caused by separation from family, friends, and "familiar, supportive environments." In a 1996 review of the psychological scientific literature on homesickness, a group of researchers cited a study estimating that some 50 to 75 percent of the general population had dealt with the affliction. According to the review, homesickness manifests in both mild and "intense" forms. It can lead to depression, difficulty concentrating, apathy, detachment, or grieving, among other symptoms. People suffering from the condition have also reported physical ailments, ranging from gastric and intestinal issues to headaches and fatigue. To Miranda van Tilburg, an associate professor of clinical research at Campbell University, the symptoms aren't surprising. "We know the brain and body are intimately connected," she says. "When we're stressed, anxious, depressed, we get headaches, stomach aches, fatigue, etc. Homesickness is no different."

Van Tilburg began studying homesickness in the 1990s. She found that there was a gap in the research about the condition not because people weren't suffering from it but because it was perceived as trivial. "I actually would have people laugh in my face," she says. And, although she no longer specializes in the topic, van Tilburg says she remains the go-to expert for anyone interested in homesickness because there are so few people researching it. "It is still sort of seen as something that's not worth studying," she says.

It wasn't always this way. Formal research into feelings of homesickness in the Western world dates back to the late seventeenth century, according to historian Susan Matt, the author of *Homesickness: An American History* and a professor at Weber State University. In his 1688 dissertation, Johannes Hofer, a Swiss scholar, chronicled one of the earliest known recorded cases of homesickness as a medical illness. The case concerned a Swiss student who had relocated from Bern to Basel and fallen ill. The patient described his condition as a burning fever, though he didn't run a temperature. He told his host family he felt sad, and they, in turn, sought the advice of a doctor, who suggested they try flushing out the patient's bodily fluids—a procedure much like an enema. When that didn't work, the family rushed to construct a makeshift bed to transport the student home. As soon as the journey got underway, the student began to perk up. According to Hofer, the student had been "nearly half dead." But, now, he "began to draw breath more freely, to respond to inquiries more easily, and to show a better tranquility of mind." As the convoy approached his hometown, the student's symptoms abated. Soon, "he was restored to his whole sane self."

Hofer concluded the student's ailment was "none other than Nostalgia, which admits no remedy other than a return to the homeland." Hofer based his theory on a range of anecdotes rather than a formal survey. Although it lacks the rigour of modern science, his dissertation marks one of the first medical forays into the study of homesickness, an illness Hofer believed could afflict people across continental Europe.

According to Matt, Hofer's findings inspired other doctors and scholars to take up the topic in the early eighteenth century. By the 1750s, the word *homesickness* started to appear in the English language. Some thirty years later, British doctors were diagnosing Welsh soldiers with nostalgia.

Matt writes that Hofer's concept of nostalgia—a term he coined based on *nostos*, the Greek word for "homecoming"—was used interchangeably with homesickness until roughly the early twentieth century, when nostalgia began evolving into its contemporary definition: a longing for a bygone era rather than for a specific place. From the late 1600s through the 1800s, European and American doctors considered homesickness, by both its names, a diagnosable illness. Doctors recommended various methods to cure it, from isolating patients in towers—assuming that people who used to live in mountainous regions simply missed the elevation—to avoiding idleness and banning the singing of popular songs like "Home, Sweet Home!"

Today, homesickness doesn't carry the status it once did as a treatable affliction. As van Tilburg, whose research now focuses on gastrointestinal disorders, points out, there's a stigma associated with homesickness; most adults don't want to admit they feel it.

How did we go from acknowledging and treating homesickness to ridiculing it at worst and overlooking it at best? According to Matt, the shift began in the late 1700s, with the rise of Enlightenment-era ideas about the pursuit of individual happiness and the supposed virtue of separating oneself from one's community. As more people started migrating to colonies abroad, including in what would become the United States and Canada, some started to believe that leaving home in search of ambition and commerce was far more virtuous than staying put. Matt cites Thomas Arnold, an English physician who saw homesickness as "an unreasonable fondness for the place of our birth."

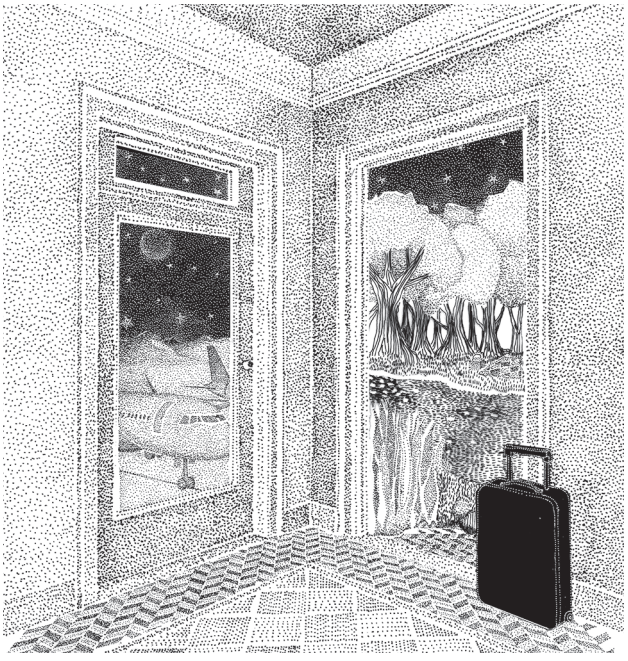
By the mid-nineteenth century, Matt writes, some Americans and Europeans were convinced that technological advancements and infrastructure such as the telegraph, the postal service, and steamships would vanquish homesickness once and for all. In 1846, for instance, a French physician reported that such innovations were making cases of homesickness increasingly rare. By 1899, American observers came to a similar conclusion. "Nostalgia has grown less common in these days of quick communication, of rapid transmission of news and of a widened knowledge of geography," one American newspaper noted. Homesickness, they suggested, had been eradicated, "except in the case of the very young or the densely ignorant."

In some realms, including the military, homesickness retained its gravity for

a while longer. During the American Civil War, Matt writes, doctors claimed that homesickness had killed some seventy-four men. She also cites Thomas Dodman, the author of *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of a Deadly Emotion* and an assistant professor at Columbia University, who notes that the French army recorded fatal cases of nostalgia until 1884. Matt found that, during the First World War, the Canadian military banned musicians from playing the bagpipes, fearing it would tarnish the morale of Scottish Canadian troops and perhaps even impact their overall well-being.

Matt writes that, for many others, the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries meant increasing levels of shame attached to homesickness among adults and, sometimes, even among children. By then, social Darwinists, who believed adaptability was a facet of human evolution, had successfully infantilized homesickness. In writings and commentaries on the subject, they attributed the condition to groups they deemed emotionally and intellectually stunted, such as Black Americans and Indigenous peoples—groups that have historically had higher incidences of being forced from their homes—as well as women. By the twentieth century, whatever sympathy there had been for homesickness was largely abandoned, thanks in large part to the technological advancements many people believed had made the condition obsolete. In addition to railroads and steamships, there were now telephones, automobiles, and passenger jets, all of which made leaving home seem easier.

According to Matt, the period after the Second World War also brought about a new perception that people should be willing to transfer their loyalty from their family and community to their country and employer. This was fuelled in part by the social and cultural conformity of the era and the proliferation of the "organization man" ideal. This was the belief that, as one writer described it in 1956, men not only work for their employer but "belong to it as well." "Families cannot be too closely attached to their kindred," sociologist W. Lloyd Warner wrote in 1962, "or they will be held to one location, socially and economically maladapted." This idea, Matt writes, underpinned the widespread relocation of workers by their employer. It also contributed to the appeal of suburbs, places nuclear families flocked to that were far from their extended families but could be fashioned as ideal homes.



Psychologists furthered the idea that living close to one's extended family made one socially maladapted. They also equated homesickness with childishness and instructed parents to prevent kids, especially boys, from showing emotion. In her book, Matt quotes one mother writing to her son, in the 1940s, while he was away at camp. "Don't let anybody know you are homesick," she advised. "Men never show their feelings like this and you would be a 'SISSY' if you come home."

When my counsellor in Virginia told me she'd struggled with homesickness, it was the first time I was able to acknowledge that leaving home is exhilarating and energizing but also hard. It pushes you outside of your comfort zone and forces you to abandon people and places that make you feel safe. I'd tried to brush those feelings off, and I was beginning to understand why. They're unpleasant, certainly. But they're also something we still tend to be ashamed of.

Homesickness research remains a relatively small field, one that's often engulfed by related mental health struggles, including depression and anxiety. But what's changed in recent decades is a growing willingness to talk openly about mental health and vulnerability. When I spoke with van Tilburg, I told her how her research resonated with me. She'd found, for instance, that people are more prone to homesickness if they engage in passive mental activities—such as, in my case, researching and writing a dissertation—rather than active physical ones. "No wonder you were homesick!" she said. Hearing van Tilburg and my counsellor validate my experiences helped me realize that my earlier attempts to feel better—like the well-intentioned Venn diagram sheet—had probably made things worse. Those efforts addressed feelings related to homesickness, like stress and anxiety, but ignored the root of the problem. I had been considering only the symptoms, without looking at the cause.

Researchers have found that homesickness generates anxiety often because being disconnected from a sense of home leads to a loss of control over everything from routine to environment. This discomfort is natural, according to Mark Leary. He believes homesickness evolved to discourage us from venturing alone into the unfamiliar, particularly in an era when we didn't know what else was out there. It serves a similar purpose today, warning us not to abandon supportive groups or environments and encouraging us to find our way back to them if we leave or get separated. When we push back against that, we're resisting our natural instincts.

It Follows

BY DOMENICA MARTINELLO

What good is a backward glance?
Lot's wife looked and became the
pillar of her community. Orpheus looked.

Now his head sings on a spike.
I refuse to be useful only
in the rear-view of my strife.

I thought back to the nineteenth-century reverence for technology's power to resolve such ills as homesickness. Could we really fool our evolutionary instincts with everything from telegrams to text messages? During my time away from home, I've relied on technology—tools like Skype and Instagram—to keep in touch with home. In California, I ignored local news, preferring to stream CBC Radio out of Vancouver in between weekly Skype sessions with my best friend. I asked van Tilburg how she thinks our hyperconnectivity has changed our relationship to homesickness. When she started researching homesickness, the internet wasn't a household staple and smartphones were rare. Still, van Tilburg told me about a small study she started a few years ago (but never got to finish), in collaboration with high school students, which focused on cellphone use at summer camps. The students found that homesickness rates were significantly higher at camps that allowed cellphones versus at ones that banned them.

John-Tyler Binfet, who studies stress reduction, including how to manage homesickness, at the University of British Columbia (UBC), thinks that, as with so many aspects of our digitized lives, the problem doesn't necessarily lie with technology per se but with how we use it. "You can celebrate a past event, or you can celebrate a new connection," he says. Binfet advises the students he works with at UBC to use social media or text messaging to share photos and stories from new experiences they're having rather than to revisit old ones. Likewise, van Tilburg, Leary, and Chris Thurber, an expert in homesickness among children, believe technology can, when used correctly, help people get accustomed to new environments. Google Maps, for instance, can prepare us with a dose of the unfamiliar before we dive into it. But even that can only help so much. Binfet, who is from California, admitted to me that he had struggled with homesickness after moving to BC. He told me he'd sometimes sit in his car and imagine what it would be like to drive south, for hours and hours, until he was home. I knew exactly how he felt.

Embracing the unfamiliar is far easier said than done for the millions driven from their homes every year by warfare, political and economic instability, famine, and increasingly, climate change. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are nearly 79.5 million forcibly displaced people in the world—an unprecedented figure that, among other things, brings new urgency to better understanding how to deal with homesickness and better acknowledging the various forms it can take.

Swati Chawla, a scholar of exile and migration in South Asia, questions whether the term "homesickness" can sufficiently capture refugees' experiences, let alone help researchers devise remedies. "I think of homesickness as an experience that is predicated upon a home being there," she wrote to me in an email. "To me, homesickness arises out of a voluntary move to another place and implies agency and privilege." Admitting you miss your home country while living in a new one can garner unfair allegations of ingratitude—if not dangerous slurs to "go back where you came from."

The impossibility of return can be figurative as well as literal, a fact explored by Svetlana Boym, who was a professor of Slavic languages and literature at Harvard University and is the author of *The Future of Nostalgia*. "Nostalgia," she writes, "is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy." It's rare to go home and find it exactly how you left it: when I'm back in Oakville, for example, I often find the open fields transformed into construction sites and condo buildings. Though the change feels inevitable, I can't help but miss the trees. Over time, Boym writes, our understanding of home becomes a figment of our imagination, a memory we've invested in emotionally. The clash of home as we thought it would be and home as it is can cause psychological anguish.

In some cases, these feelings can manifest in what Glenn Albrecht, an Australian environmental philosopher and the author of *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World*, calls "solastalgia." In the early 2000s, Albrecht coined the term and defined it as "the homesickness you have when you are still at home," a "painful emotion in the face of negatively experienced environmental change." Albrecht's study initially focused on communities in New South Wales affected by large-scale mining, but others have applied his concept to countries all over the world, from Canada to Indonesia.

Ashlee Cunsolo, now dean of the School of Arctic and Sub-Arctic Studies of the Labrador Institute at Memorial University, says feelings of solastalgia are particularly acute among people who live in close connection to the land. In 2009, she started participating in Inuit-led studies on climate change and mental health. This research is showing that long-term changes to the landscape, such as loss of sea ice or disrupted migration patterns of wildlife, are disorienting in many ways. "A lot of people were talking about this sense of, almost a loss and a homesickness," she says. "That home that they loved, even though they were still living in it, wasn't the same."

The American Psychological Association has already recognized solastalgia in a 2017 guide on climate change and mental health co-authored with Eco-America, an environmental nonprofit. A representative for Health Canada said its upcoming 2021 report on climate change will include a chapter on mental health and a definition of solastalgia as it relates to Canada. This recognition might lead to more funding for those researching solastalgia and for policies that address it. As with most mental health concerns, researchers say it's crucial to create spaces where homesickness can be acknowledged and those who experience it don't feel judged. Simply put, doing so helps people who feel desperately alone feel a little less lonely.

When I asked Cunsolo if it's only a matter of time until climate change makes everyone feel homesick, or at least solastalgic, she stressed that, although the feeling is acute among groups that have a close connection to the land, it's also increasingly widespread. Try as we might to transform ourselves into cosmopolitan citizens of the world, it turns out that where we come from—what we identify as home, whether it's a place or specific people in our lives—still matters. Then she echoed something van Tilburg told me: solastalgia is about grief and mourning and sadness and anguish, but "if people are grieving, it's coming from a place of love, and that's coming from a commitment to the natural world and the environment around us."

There's some solace in this, even if it's the sort of solace you get when you FaceTime with a friend: the experience may temper the pain, but it doesn't make the homesickness go away. As a Polish migrant to the United States told a homesickness researcher in the 1980s, "You have to divorce yourself from the past." Getting over homesickness means cultivating a steadfast commitment to hope. It reorients you toward a future state where the pain of leaving home and severing ties with a place you love will have been worth it. Does that state ever exist? Maybe for some, but for me, someone privileged enough to have a home I'm safe in, believing that some other place will be better feels like a tremendous leap of faith. In our strange new world of pandemics, polarized polities, and surveillance technology—things that are reshaping the very fabric of our everyday lives—even our present is unknowable. All of which makes gambling on the future an even more courageous act.

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SOCIETY

The Wrong Side of the New Age

Survivors of Shambhala International, a worldwide Buddhist community, reveal decades of abuse

BY MATTHEW REMSKI
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES LEE CHIAHAN

On April 4, 1987, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche lay dying in the old Halifax Infirmary. He was forty-seven. To the medical staff, Trungpa likely resembled any other patient admitted for palliative care. But, to the inner circle gathered around his bed and for tens of thousands of followers, he was a brilliant philosopher-king fading into sainthood. They believed that, through his reconstruction of "Shambhala"—the mythical Tibetan kingdom on which he'd modelled his New Age community, creating one of the most influential Buddhist organizations in the West—he had innovated a spiritual cure for a postmodern age, a series of precepts to help Westerners meditate their way out of apathy and egotism.

Standing by Trungpa's deathbed was Thomas Rich, his spiritual successor. Rich was joined by Diana Mukpo (formerly Diana Pybus), who had married Trungpa in 1970, a few months after she turned sixteen. Also present was Trungpa's twenty-four-year-old son, Mipham Rinpoche. While the cohort chanted and prayed, twenty-five-year-old Leslie Hays listened from outside the door. Trungpa had taken her as one of his seven spiritual wives two years earlier. After being called in to say a brief goodbye, Hays walked out into the evening, secretly relieved Trungpa was dying. She would no longer be serving his sexual demands; enduring his pinches, punches, and kicks; or listening to him drunkenly recount hallucinated conversations with the long-dead sages of medieval Tibet.

Trungpa stopped breathing at 8:05 p.m. His attendants bathed his body in saffron water; painted prayers on small squares of paper and fixed them to his eyes, nostrils, and mouth; then wheeled the gurney into an ambulance to bring him home for a ritual wake. The cortège drove south, through the chilly night, toward Point Pleasant Park, the forested tip of the Halifax Peninsula. They pulled into a circular drive at 545 Young Avenue, a mansion dubbed "The Kalapa Court" after the fabled Shambhala seat of power.

Devotees rolled Trungpa's body into the living room, which had been mostly cleared of furniture except for a Tibetan throne. They dressed the body in gold brocade and wrenched its legs into a crossed position to prop it up in a final meditation. In his death notice to the community, Rich stated that the guru had attained "parinirvana"—a transcendent state in which he would be free from the cycle of rebirth. (Years later, Trungpa's personal doctor would cite liver disease from alcohol abuse as the cause of death.) "We vow to perpetuate your world," Rich wrote.

Following Trungpa's death, his Halifax congregation and hundreds of pilgrims flocked to Kalapa for five days of visitation. Temple guards in full military uniform admitted mourners around the clock. They filed in to the dim room, through clouds of juniper incense, to chant, meditate, and bow in prostration. They believed that Trungpa's consciousness was expanding into the infinite. One group member recalls throwing the windows open to the cold, wet air as a funk set in.

Some mourners knew Trungpa from his lectures on meditation. Others had been enthralled by his 1973 book, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, which has sold 200,000 copies. Others still had likely attended the opening of his Naropa Institute, in Boulder, Colorado, in summer 1974, when 1,500 spiritual seekers had arrived to listen to him lecture beside countercultural heroes like Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. Many in the room in Halifax had uprooted their lives to live close to Trungpa, to work in his centres or transcribe his teachings. Some had pledged him their present and future lives through the ritual bonds central to Tantric religion. However they'd come, and for whatever reason they'd stayed, they were the core of what would become Shambhala International, a thriving network of more than 200 meditation centres and retreat destinations in dozens of countries. Headquartered in Nova Scotia, the organization's motto is "Making Enlightened Society Possible."

These days, Trungpa's kingdom presents less like an "enlightened society" than it does a longitudinal study of intergenerational abuse and of how thin the line between religion and cult can be. In the thirty-three years since her husband's death, Leslie Hays has felt her relief sharpen into fury. She has now emerged at the forefront of a movement of ex-followers who say that Trungpa's public image as a spiritual genius has been used to hide a legacy of deception, exploitation, behavioural control, and systemic abuse. Their activism

has organized around Trungpa's son, Mipham, who eventually inherited his father's empire and, in 2018, began to face his own public allegations of physical violence and sexual assault.

Over the course of two years, I've interviewed close to fifty ex-Shambhala members. They have told me stories of every type of mistreatment imaginable, from emotional manipulation and extreme neglect to molestation and rape—stories that turn Shambhala's brand narrative, with its promises of utopia, upside down. Posting on the Facebook page created to support survivors like herself, Hays has shortened the group's name simply to "Sham."

Nearly 2,500 years ago, Buddhism began, in ancient India, as an austere movement of self-discovery that preached meditation and meticulous attention to ethics. Early converts radically rejected the classism and ritualism of existing religions. Today, Buddhist teachings hold that the mind is the first and central source of conflict and that meditation can help a person see reality more clearly, past their anxious desires. This, it is claimed, can decrease or even extinguish cycles of violence.

Mass-market visions of this modern Buddhism tend to orbit around stately figures, like the Dalai Lama and Thích Nhất Hạnh, the antiwar cleric from Vietnam nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Martin Luther King Jr. in 1967. American popularizers include Jack Kornfield and Sharon Salzberg, who co-founded the Insight Meditation Society, in Massachusetts, in 1975. Their professional trainings helped commodify and suburbanize ancient meditation techniques into secular wellness tools for use in self-help psychotherapy and even business coaching.

Trungpa's organization grew in tandem with this popular interest. But his own reputation was built on the idea of enlightened chaos. He introduced his recruits to "crazy wisdom," the practice of using bizarre and sometimes abusive methods to jolt devotees into higher states of being. In a series of 1983 sermons, he compared the attainment of spiritual wisdom to the act of rape. His butler recounted, in a memoir, Trungpa torturing a dog as a metaphor for how the unenlightened should be taught the uncompromising truths of Buddhism. Trungpa also taught a technique called "transmutation," by which an enlightened person transforms the common or even the disgraceful aspects of their life into the sublime, thereby purifying themselves. The Tantric texts, logic, and ritual by which transmutation happens are all meant to be kept secret—which worked in Trungpa's favour. His true ministry, if openly known, would hardly have ingratiated him to buttoned-down Nova Scotians.

Trungpa first scoped out Atlantic Canada in 1977. He travelled in the guise of a Bhutanese prince, making his disciples, during dinner, wear tuxedoes or evening gowns and white gloves. He loved the region's remoteness, isolation, and rain. Trungpa found in Nova Scotia the perfect setting for a kind of spiritual invasion. It was sparsely populated, with the highest unemployment rate in the country. Citizens were dissatisfied with local government and ready for something new. He observed that Nova Scotians were psychologically "cooperative" and "starved" and opined that they needed "more energy to be put on them." Back in Boulder, he declared that he could feel the same goodness in the earth in Nova Scotia that he remembered from Tibet, which he had fled in 1959.

Trungpa started frequenting Halifax as his eastern seat after devotees acquired the Young Avenue property. By the time Trungpa died, around 800 of his most ardent followers—mostly young, well-educated, middle-class white Americans—had settled on the East Coast life, laying down roots from Halifax to Pleasant Bay, a small community in Cape Breton, where they helped establish Gampo Abbey, now presided over by one of Trungpa's most famous former students, self-help author Pema Chödrön. Followers opened businesses in the burgeoning wellness sector, working as massage therapists, acupuncturists, and psychotherapists. In the summer, they gathered for communal events, like "seminary," where Trungpa would teach Buddhist philosophy for days on end, and "encampment," where members would march in parades and sing songs around campfires. Over the years, Maritimers joined the movement, drawn to its secular accessibility and devotional intensity, and soon came the first generation of born-and-raised Halifax Shambhala Buddhists, who joined the ranks of other so-called Dharma Brats in the US.

It was a community in thrall to Trungpa, a leader with an authoritarian streak whose eccentricities were typically passed off as transmutation. When he asked his dishevelled devotees to cut their hair and become professional, Trungpa—who had his suits hand-tailored on London's Savile Row—was transmuting their late-hippie immaturity. When he dressed up like Idi Amin or rode a white stallion while wearing a pith helmet and phony war medals, he was transmuting the aggression of militarism. When he insisted that his courtiers learn Downton Abbey–style dinner etiquette, he was transmuting the colonial pretension that had almost destroyed the Asian wisdom culture he embodied. On the grandest scale, Trungpa saw Shambhala as a transmutation of the nation-state itself—complete with a national anthem, ministers, equestrian displays, an army, a treasury, specially minted coinage, and photo IDs.

But Trungpa's transmutations didn't stop there. They were also used to rationalize the sexual abuse he committed against countless women students—abuse that devotees justified as Trungpa transmuting the repressed Christian prudery of North America and turning lust into insight. Public evidence of this abuse was first published in a local Boulder magazine in 1979, but the most public and credible accusations came from Hays on Facebook, starting in 2018. Hays remembers Trungpa demanding women and girls at all hours of the day and night, some of them teenagers. He was not only prone to outbursts of physical violence but, according to Hays, her job as a "spiritual wife" (traditionally a consort for ritualized sexual meditations) involved offering Trungpa bumps of cocaine, which she remembers

his lieutenants pretending was either a secret ritual substance or vitamin D. Hays's entire relationship with Trungpa testifies to how he used his charisma to prey on followers.

Hays grew up in a Minnesota farm town and moved to Boulder, in 1981, to study journalism at the University of Colorado. She was twenty. Three years later, she took a nanny job with a couple who were devotees of Trungpa, moving into their house. She was asked to attend a summertime Shambhala training camp so that she'd be more aligned with the family's values. That winter, the couple was hosting a wedding that Trungpa himself would be attending. They regaled her with stories of his "unfathomable" brilliance and asked her to prepare to meet him with meditations that involved visualizing him as divine. They took her shopping for clothes and taught her to walk in heels. In our conversation, Hays remembers being impressionable at that age and thinking it would be fun "to meet an enlightened meditation master from Tibet."

At the wedding, Trungpa lavished attention on Hays, then showed up at her employer's house the next day to propose that they marry. Hays was baffled, so he invited her to his home for a get-to-know-you date. Guards ushered her in to his bedroom, where he was waiting for her, naked. That same night, he asked her to marry him again. Stunned, she agreed, believing it to be an honour, and for a while, there was a honeymoon-like feeling between them. But, after the first week, Hays told me, things started to go wrong. In the bedroom, Hays says, he would use a vibrator until she screamed out in pain. Then Trungpa started to punch and kick her.

"What Trungpa did," says Liz Craig, "was create an environment for emotional and sexual harm in which nobody was accountable for their actions." Craig worked as a nanny in Trungpa's household. "If he'd been publicly violent, it would have been easier to identify him as harmful and Shambhala as a cult."

Another ex-Shambhala student, who asked to remain anonymous, knows of several women Trungpa physically assaulted besides her. "He pinched me to the point of leaving dark bruises," she says. I reached her at her office in Nova Scotia, where she runs a practice as a sexual-violence trauma therapist. She described one summer-long event in 1985 at the Rocky Mountain Dharma Center (now the Shambhala Mountain Center), north of Boulder. She was twenty-three at the time and was recruited to cook and clean in Trungpa's residence. Trungpa's "henchmen," as she calls them, would circulate through the participants to find the women he desired. "The entire scene around him was sexualized," she says. "Trungpa was basically the king of the universe, and any contact with him was a blessing that was going to guarantee your enlightenment and eternal salvation."

It wasn't only women who were caught in Shambhala's abusive culture. Ex-member Michal Bandac, now living in Germany, says that, in the 1980s, Shambhala adults introduced him to cocaine use when he was twelve. The scene was considered safe, Bandac says, because they were taught that, "according to Buddhism, the children are always better than their parents." Bandac's mother, Patricia, was a senior Shambhala teacher for thirty years and the director of the Nova Scotia retreat centre. Since leaving Shambhala in 2015, she has struggled to understand how the group affected her family. While she wasn't aware of her son's exposure to cocaine, she does remember him telling her about Shambhala women in their thirties luring him into his first sexual experiences. "I was kind of shocked," she says. "But I didn't do anything about it. It was so normalized. There was statutory rape going on all over the place."

Abuse continued after Trungpa's death. In 1989, the *New York Times* reported that Trungpa's spiritual successor, Thomas Rich, had been having unprotected sex with an unknown number of men and women while being HIV positive. This not only had gone on for years—Rich was suspected to have contracted the illness in 1985—but was likely known to senior leadership. Moreover, according to a 1990 article, Rich's sexual history suggested such encounters weren't always consensual. The media coverage forced Rich, in California at this time, into exile. After Kier Craig—Rich's student and the brother of Liz, the Trungpa nanny—died of HIV/AIDS, likely contracted from Rich, even more Shambhalians fled the community. Program attendance and membership donations plummeted. The legal entities that held Shambhala's assets were dissolved to avoid liability.

In the early 1990s, Tibetan clerics moved to stabilize Shambhala by certifying Trungpa's son, Mipham, as a reincarnated master and the rightful heir to his father. It was an unlikely fit. Although

in his thirties, Mipham didn't have any of the expected monastic training and was not known for his charisma. Nevertheless, in 1995, Mipham was enthroned as sovereign over Shambhala and dubbed with one of his father's own honorifics: "Sakyong," which roughly translates to "Earth Ruler."

As Sakyong, Mipham's management approach was distinctly corporate. By 2002, he'd appointed the former public-relations head of Amnesty International as Shambhala's new president. He replaced the mostly male administration with a more gender-balanced and international board of directors. Between 1999 and 2018, Mipham's restructuring helped Shambhala's global membership grow from under 7,000 to 14,000. Members participated in programs and training at outposts around the world, drawing an annual revenue of $18 million (US) in North America alone.

In the early 2000s, memories of Trungpa's and Rich's acts of sexual abuse seemed to have faded. Chödrön, Shamabhala's self-help superstar based out of Cape Breton, lit out on an extraordinary run of mass-media success, appearing on Bill Moyers' PBS miniseries *Faith and Reason* and eventually selling more than 1.2 million copies of her books in eighteen languages. Mipham also moved to shield what were reputed to be the most mystical elements of his father's teaching content behind a paywall. He developed a pyramid-style series of training sessions and ceremonies only he could preside over as a kind of papal gatekeeper. Sporting brocade robes, Mipham came into his own as a regal figure, giving ritual initiations to new and old members and creating newer levels of secret practices for devotees to invest in. In 2005, he married Khandro Tseyang—the daughter of a Tibetan spirit medium who claims a royal pedigree. From the outside, things seemed to be looking up. But it was during these same Camelot years that Mipham allegedly assaulted attendants and students.

One of those students was Julia Howell, born into Shambhala in Nova Scotia in 1984. For children who grew up in the community, the promise and betrayal of their upbringing are difficult to separate. Sometimes, Trungpa's world felt like a happy place. Some describe loving the free-range summer "Sun Camps." They were consistently told that they were special—the "first Western Buddhists," who would both embody and evangelize a new age. They had been given early access to authentic Buddhism, so they were told, and the teachings would take care of them. They were encouraged to internalize the group's meditation techniques and use them whenever they lost their feeling of "basic goodness."

When Howell was twenty-four, her mother was diagnosed with stage-four breast cancer. That fall, Howell applied for the Tantric training that was said to eventually lead to full citizenship within the mystical world of Shambhala. Her aim was partly to prepare herself for the coming loss and partly to join her mother in practices to prepare for death. Howell's initiations involved vowing to perceive Mipham—now the group's leader—as the gatekeeper to enlightenment. When her mother died, in 2010, Howell practised with an intensity that matched her grief. Her ardour drew her closer to Mipham's inner circle.

In 2011, Howell went to a party at the Kalapa Court, the enclave that Trungpa founded in Halifax. The occasion was Mipham's daughter's first birthday party. Howell says that, after his wife had gone to bed and most of the guests had left, Mipham, drunk, assaulted her. "I felt frozen, without agency," she says. "I had taken a vow at seminary to follow his instructions like commands." Alone, confused, and grieving her mother, Howell plunged deeper into her practice to make sense of it all.

"This liturgy embodies the magical heart of Shambhala," announces the text Howell used. Written by Mipham, it proposes that the gifts of Tantric practice flow from developing a pure view of the master, then merging with him, body and mind. A key part of the ritual involves a purification fantasy. Howell was instructed to visualize light streaming down from a deity seated at the crown of her head. The light was washing away the karma of negative emotions, seen as dirt and muck pouring downward, out of her body and into the earth. Inevitably, this brought up traumatic memories associated with the assault. "It was an exercise in self-shaming," says Howell. Her practice included visualizing Mipham, in royal attire, hovering above her head, then morphing into a fantastical bird, who entered her body and descended to dissolve into light in her chest. Should another assault happen, rather than experiencing it as a violation, she would will herself to see Mipham as the Buddha. "I was really training to think that rape is not rape," she says.

After more than three years of trying to interpret the assault and justify Mipham's behaviour, Howell decided to face him. It took several months to get the meeting through underlings. Mipham offered her a weak apology "about the whole thing," as Howell remembers. She recalls him performing a healing ritual for her, then handing her a mala—a sort of Tibetan rosary—and saying, "This is for your practice."

Through the summer and fall of 2017, stories about similar abuse ripped into other spiritual communities. In July, eight former attendants of the late Sogyal Rinpoche, a celebrated Buddhist teacher and the author of the bestselling *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, published an open letter describing decades of physical, sexual, and financial abuse by the religious leader. In November, Karen Rain alleged on Facebook that renowned yoga teacher Krishna Pattabhi Jois had sexually assaulted her and other women under the guise of "postural adjustments." The children of Shambhala were watching. Andrea Winn, who had lived most of her life in Trungpa's kingdom, decided it was time to speak out. (As Winn declined an interview, what follows is from publicly available records.)

"Something has gone tragically wrong in the Shambhala community," wrote Winn in "Project Sunshine: Final Report," a feat of guerrilla journalism published online in February 2018. The report featured five anonymous testimonies of assault, rape, and abuse that implicated unnamed Shambhala senior

leaders as either enablers or perpetrators. "We have allowed abuse within our community for nearly four decades, and it is time to take practical steps to end it." Winn, now fifty-three, included details about her own childhood sexual abuse by "multiple" community members and how, when she spoke out as a young adult, she was shunned. Her healing process led her to a counselling-psychology degree specializing in relational trauma. "One thing that is clear to me is that a single woman can be silenced," she writes. "However, a group of organized concerned citizens will be a completely different ball game."

Shambhala's old guard likely knew that Winn's report was coming. Three days before Winn published, Diana Mukpo, Trungpa's wife by legal marriage, posted a letter to Shambhala's community news website attempting to discredit Winn and the project, calling it a personal attack on her family. "When I first heard about Project Sunshine," Mukpo wrote, "I thought it would be a wonderful way to embark on this important process. But now that I've seen its connection to the spreading of inaccurate, misleading facts, I no longer have faith in its ability to assist with this important task in an unbiased and honest manner."

Winn teamed up with a retired lawyer, Carol Merchasin, who worked through the spring of 2018 to corroborate testimonies for a second, more explosive report. This round focused on allegations of sexual misconduct and assault against Shambhala's leader, Mipham. Merchasin recounts that they reached out to the Shambhala Kalapa council to present the allegations prior to publishing and to encourage the organization to conduct an investigation. No one from the council would meet with the whistleblowers, but, according to Merchasin, the council hired a mediator who threatened her with legal action days before she and Winn planned to release the second report online on June 28.

Soon after the report was published, Mipham paused his teaching activities and issued a vaguely apologetic statement announcing that he was committing to a shared project of healing. "This is not easy work," he concluded, "and we cannot give up on each other. For me, it always comes back to feeling my own heart, my own humanity, and my own genuineness. It is with this feeling that I express to all of you my deep love and appreciation. I am committed to engaging in this process with you."

But Winn and Merchasin released a third report, that August, that included two further accounts alleging that Mipham had abused his power. Facing pressure from local and international media coverage, Shambhala decided to launch an independent investigation. The investigator's conclusion, released in February 2019, was that Mipham had caused a lot of harm, and they encouraged him to take responsibility and "be directly involved in the healing process." Two weeks after the findings were released, six former personal attendants to Mipham came forward with an open letter about their years of serving him. They described his chronic alcohol abuse and sexual misconduct, his profligate spending, and his physical assaults against Shambhala members. Six days later, forty-two of the organization's teachers posted their own open letter, calling on Mipham to step down "for the foreseeable future."

Shambhala leaders could no longer dismiss allegations of long-standing systemic abuse.

Suddenly, Shambhala leaders could no longer dismiss allegations of long-standing systemic abuse. The community's Dharma Brats—those of Winn's generation and later who'd grown up in the kingdom—now had a lot to say and a place to say it.

Sometime after the third report, Mipham fled Canada, with his wife and three young daughters, for India and Nepal. In February 2019, he issued a carefully worded acknowledgement of the abuse crisis, declaring that he would retreat from his teaching and administrative duties. "I want to express wholeheartedly how sorry I feel about all that has happened," Mipham lamented. "I understand that I am the main source of that suffering and confusion and want to again apologize for this. I am deeply sorry."

For more than a year, Mipham did in fact lie low, avoiding public events. But what is expedient in public-relations terms carries a steep price for Tantric devotees. For them, Mipham's legal and administrative standing pales against the belief that his very body carries his father's perfect revelation: the ritual keys to the Shambhala kingdom. It's a Faustian bargain: they must petition for Mipham's return regardless of what they know of him and despite the repercussions for people like Julia Howell. For those who believe that Trungpa's revelation was messianic, the double bind is even tighter. It is said that Tantric teachings can be given only if devotees supplicate to the master for them. If they don't literally beg for Mipham to come back, they'll be personally responsible for the death of the enlightened society that was meant to save the world.

Last December, Mipham sent an announcement out over Shambhala networks featuring a cryptic love poem to his devotees: "Like a mist, you are always present. / Like a dream, you appear but are elusive. / Like a mountain, you remain an immovable presence in my life." The rest of the letter offered family and business news and bemoaned the state of the world.

Two weeks later, a newsletter from the Shambhala board pledged support for Mipham's return to ritual duty. The letter explained that 125 devotees had requested that Mipham confer the "Rigden Abhisheka"—an elite level of Shambhala teaching—in a bid to restore legitimacy to the damaged brand. In response, the Shambhala centre in France invited Mipham for the summer of 2020.

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Funds raised at this event support **Frontier College**, Canada's original literacy organization.

Pema Chödrön responded by stepping down from her clergy position. In a letter posted to the group's news service in January, Chödrön said that she was "disheartened" by Mipham's announced return. She had expected him to show compassion toward the survivors of his abuse, she wrote, and to do "some deep inner work on himself." But it was the support from the board, she added, that distressed her more. "How can we return to business as usual?" she wrote. "I find it discouraging that the bravery of those who had the courage to speak out does not seem to be effecting more significant change in the path forward."

The months that followed Chödrön's letter have seen stock in Trungpa's legacy continue to plummet. Shambhala centres in Frankfurt and New York issued rebukes of the board's decision to support Mipham's return. The board countered with a long-winded affirmation to steadying the course with reforms that stopped short of disinviting Mipham. And they kept fundraising.

Group members were further rattled when Michael Smith, a fifty-five-year-old former member of the Boulder Shambhala group, pled guilty to assaulting a thirteen-year-old girl he'd met through the community in the late 1990s. A similar case against William Lloyd Karelis, a seventy-three-year-old former meditation instructor for the Boulder Shambhala community, is set to go to trial next spring. Karelis is accused of repeatedly sexually assaulting a thirteen-year-old girl who had been assigned to him as a student in the 1990s. In February, the Larimer County Sheriff's Office closed a more than year-long investigation into "possible criminal activity" at the Colorado centres. They released a redacted file of their interviews with ex-members, which corroborated several of the abuse testimonies published by Winn and Merchasin, including Howell's account of Mipham assaulting her in Halifax. No charges were filed.

On March 11, when the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, Mipham was leading a Tantric meditation retreat at a monastery in Nepal. Along with the monks, 108 pilgrims from seventeen countries attended—108 being a number of ritual perfection in Indo-Tibetan religions. Mipham's blog reports a schedule of ceremonies, meet-and-greets with himself and his wife, and a sermon from the monastery's abbot, who affirmed that Mipham's leadership challenges were common to great Buddhist teachers. A wide-angle photo shows the middle-aged devotees, many of them white, sitting at attention in the shrine room. Each sports a lapel button emblazoned with what appears to be Mipham's portrait.

After the retreat, which ended March 15, pandemic lockdowns shuttered Shambhala spaces around the world. With retreat and programming income slowed to nearly nil, the San Francisco centre notified members it was on the brink of insolvency, and the larger retreat centres asked members for a bailout. Mipham's summer event in France was postponed, but he kept in touch with devotees by sending out pandemic practice instructions, including advice for devotees to chant the mantra of the Medicine Buddha, often used for healing.

For survivors of Shambhala, the reckoning continues — and with it, the struggle for recovery.

On May 14, a group of the Nepal pilgrims paved the way for Mipham's full return with an open letter reaffirming him as the organization's leader. The writers claimed that "many of the allegations reported about the Sakyong were exaggerated or completely false" but that, "if someone felt hurt or confused by their relationship with him, he has done his best to address their concerns personally." (Julia Howell confirmed that she has not heard from Mipham since the allegations were published.) Mipham's Kalapa Court is wholesome, the letter continued, is responsive to the needs of followers, and remains the centre of the Shambhala universe. "There is no Shambhala without the Sakyong," they wrote.

As of this writing, Mipham seems to be consolidating an inner core of devotees who will remain loyal to him and continue their journey toward his kingdom. And, while the remaining Shambhala administration claims to be working on reform policies, it's not quite clear who will remain to enact them or keep the faith. I made multiple requests to Mipham for comment—directly and through various Shambhala administrators—about the Winn report, the independent investigation, Howell's allegations, and his future teaching intentions. He did not respond.

FOR SURVIVORS of Shambhala, the reckoning continues—and with it, the struggle for recovery. Rachel Bernstein, a Los Angeles psychotherapist who treats ex-cult members, told me that it can be healing to reconnect not only with former members of the same group but also with former members of similar groups, so the person can understand that abuse patterns are standard and predictable. Janja Lalich, an expert on the effects of cults on children, argues that kids who grow up in a group controlled by charismatic leadership have almost no access to outside points of view or ways of being in the world. That's why she encourages ex-members to reestablish secure bonds with family or those who knew them before they entered the group. But, for those born into a cult or recruited through their parents at a young age—as was often the case with Shambhala —this option is rarely open.

John (whose last name is withheld for reasons of family privacy) ran out of options completely. In 1980, at the age of twelve, he left his father and stepmother in Miami to join his mother, Nancy, in Colorado, where, as part of her program in Buddhist psychology at Naropa University, she had to complete a three-month retreat at the Rocky Mountain Dharma Center. While she was meditating from dawn till dusk, John was in residence. One night, he said, he was woken up by

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a man—a student in his mother's cohort—assaulting him. John froze and pretended to stay asleep.

"After that first night," John wrote in a statement to the Larimer County police, "he pursued me persistently for many days—at the meditation hall, in the shower room, and in the bathrooms. I was twelve and eventually I gave in." The abuse continued, John remembered, for between three and six months. When he was thirteen, another Dharma Brat became John's girlfriend. (She went on to become Trungpa's sixth "spiritual wife" and later died by suicide at age thirty-four.) When John was fourteen, he wrote, another man at the Rocky Mountain Dharma Center—possibly an employee—abused him. Around this time, John first attempted suicide.

John told me his mother had gone to Trungpa and asked him what she should do about her troubled son. According to John, the leader told his mother it needed to be handled by professionals. Then Trungpa told her that she should attend another intensive residential seminary program. At nineteen, John wrote his mother a letter about his sexual abuse. She never answered it, he said. Years later, he found it, opened, in a family photo album. He ripped it up.

The abuse followed John into adulthood. Monique Auffrey was John's partner from 2000 to 2004; they have a daughter together, now eighteen. Auffrey knew John as someone who was both victim and aggressor, who struggled with substance abuse and who used Shambhala psychology to try to persuade her that his domestic violence was acceptable. In 2011, John was charged with uttering death threats against Auffrey and their daughter as they attempted to leave Nova Scotia. "My main memory of him is fear," she said by phone from Calgary, where she's the CEO of a nonprofit that provides services to women and children escaping domestic violence.

Auffrey said that, when she was pregnant, John forced her to take Shambhala training. She hadn't been part of the Buddhist group before meeting John. She spoke of a cycle of abuse similar to that described by victims of Trungpa and Mipham—and similar to John's own history as a victim: "He would be violent with me, attack me, insult me, threaten me, and then the response to dealing with that was to meditate and take more Shambhala lessons." Auffrey remembered "There's neither good nor bad" being a consistent mantra in the group. "It always felt like there was no accountability for anything, no matter what it was," she said. "The group's ideology allowed people to get away with rape, with assault, with crimes that the larger population would never put up with."

In our second interview, in May 2019, John described a moment that suggested he had finally abandoned Shambhala teachings. He was driving one day and pulled over when he heard an interview with Leonard Cohen on the CBC. "'These religions that promise you liberation and freedom,'" John recalled Cohen saying, "'that you will be liberated from all of this: it's a cruel promise that won't come true.'

"I just burst out crying," John said. "I was just so happy that he said something I was feeling all along. That there was a scam or some kind of package being sold. And he was saying: 'In many cases, you feel things worse, more intensely, more painfully.'" A month after that interview, John died by suicide in his Dartmouth home.

By phone, Auffrey offered a personal assessment of her late partner that seemed to ring true for Trungpa's legacy in general. "If people had rallied together to hold him accountable for his own behaviour," she told me, "there might have been a chance that he could have gotten the help he needed. That's the way I like to look at it—to hope that, with intervention, we can change the course of such a destructive trajectory." It struck me, after we hung up, that her words sounded almost Buddhist in their mindfulness and compassion. ◌

MATTHEW REMSKI writes and presents on yoga and Ayurveda. He is the author of eight books of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction.

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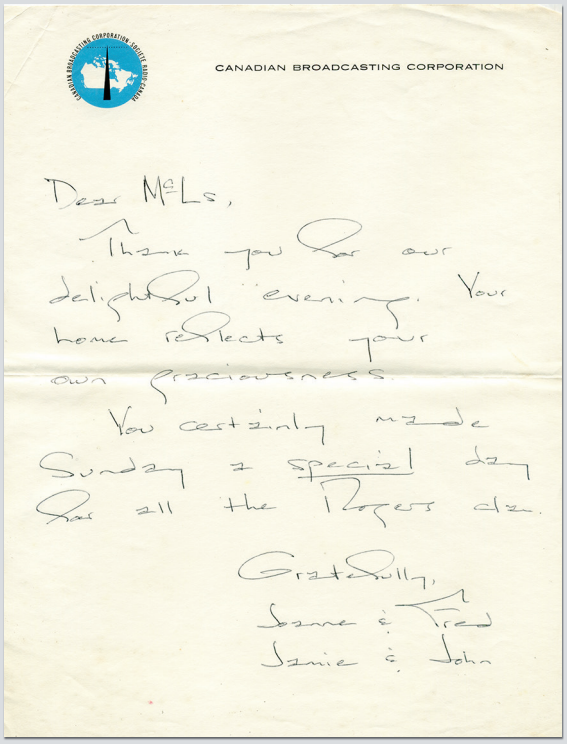
VISUAL ESSAY

My Mum and Mister Rogers

Fred Rogers believed everybody was somebody. A box of lost letters tells the story of how he helped my mother believe in herself too

BY CINDERS MCLEOD



CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

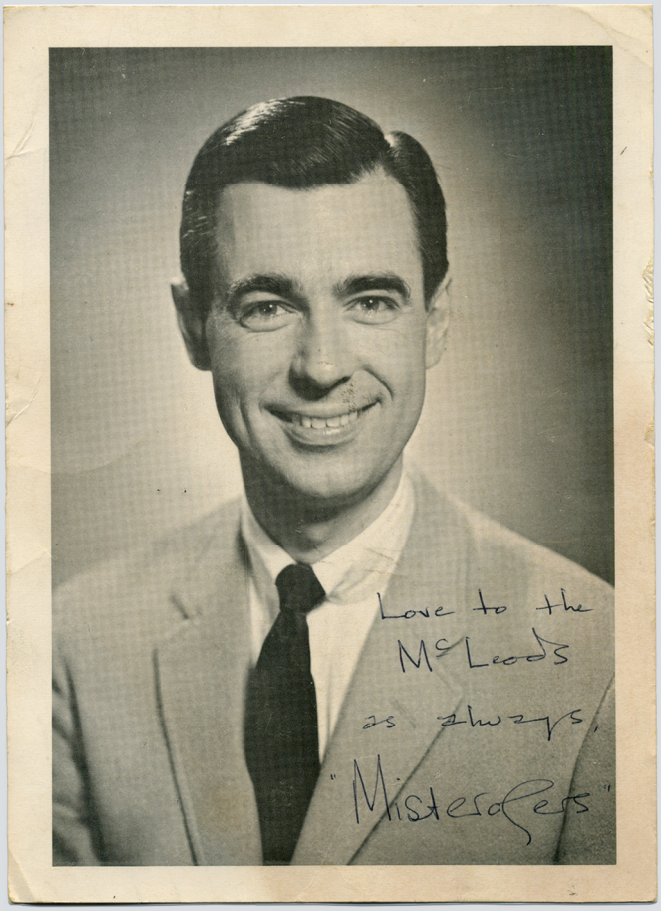
Dear Mr & Mrs,

Thank you for our delightful evening. Your home reflects your own graciousness.

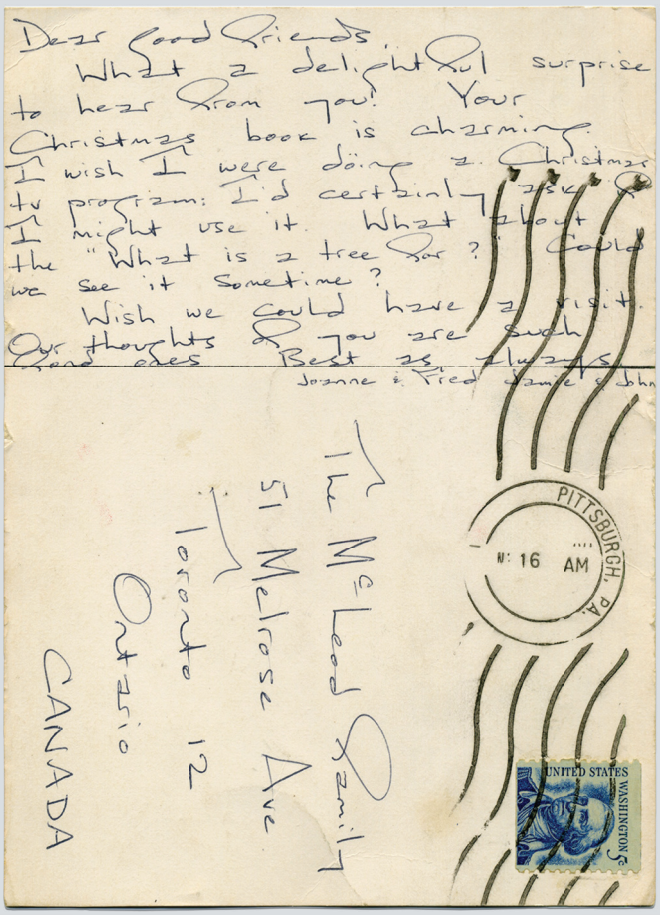
You certainly made Sunday a special day for all the Rogers clan.

Gratefully,
Joanne & Fred
Jamie & John

In the early 1960s, Fred Rogers hosted a children's show on the CBC. Diane Hutchings wrote to the network after seeing it, and a few months later, she invited him and his family for a Sunday roast.



Love to the McLeods as always, "Misterogers"



Dear Good Friends,
What a delightful surprise to hear from you! Your Christmas book is charming. I wish I were doing a Christmas tv program: I'd certainly ask if I might use it. What a laugh the "What is a tree for?" could see it sometime?
Wish we could have a visit. Our thoughts are such Best as always
Joanne & Fred Jamie & John

Mr. & Mrs. Lee McLeod & Family
51 Melrose Ave
Toronto 12
Ontario
CANADA

PITTSBURGH, PA
M: 16 AM

UNITED STATES WASHINGTON D.C.

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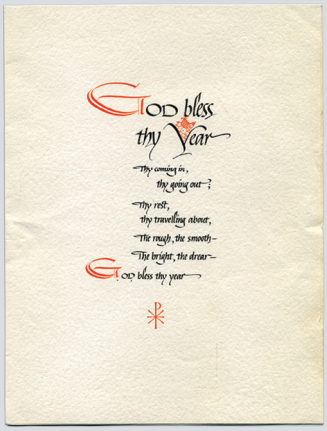
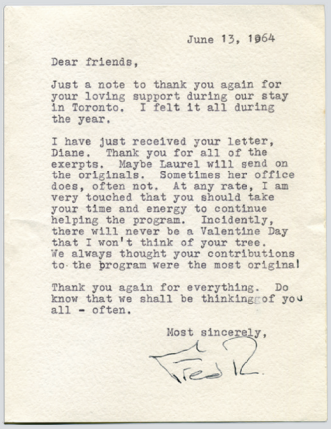




June 13, 1964

Dear friends,

Just a note to thank you again for your loving support during our stay in Toronto. I felt it all during the year.

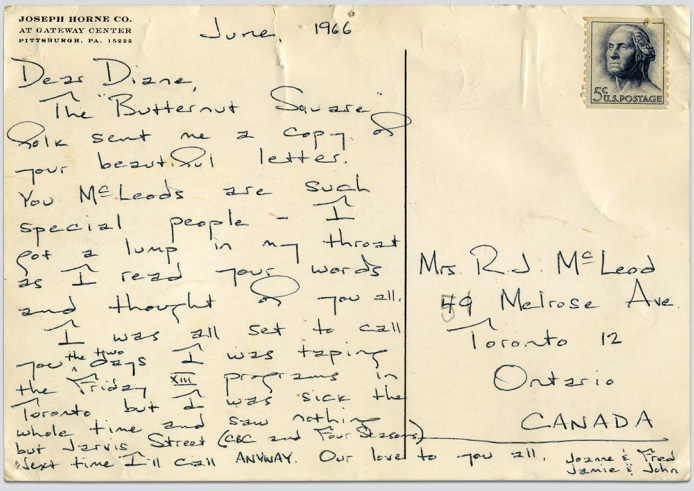
I have just received your letter, Diane. Thank you for all of the exerpts. Maybe Laurel will send on the originals. Sometimes her office does, often not. At any rate, I am very touched that you should take your time and energy to continue helping the program. Incidently, there will never be a Valentine Day that I won't think of your tree. We always thought your contributions to the program were the most original!

Thank you again for everything. Do know that we shall be thinking of you all - often.

Most sincerely,

Fred R.

Rogers stayed in Canada for a few years with his wife and two young sons, then returned to Pittsburgh when his show moved to American television. He wrote to Hutchings, "We always thought your contributions to the program were the most original."



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June 1966

Dear Diane,
The "Butternut Square" folk sent me a copy of your beautiful letter. You McLeods are such special people - I got a lump in my throat as I read your words and thought of you all. I was all set to call you the two days I was taping the Friday XIII programs in Toronto but I was sick the whole time and saw nothing but Jarvis Street (CBC and Four Seasons) Next time I'll call ANYWAY. Our love to you all. Joanne & Fred Jamie & John

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Mrs. R.J. McLeod
49 Melrose Ave.
Toronto 12
Ontario
CANADA

Rogers took the CBC concept to Pittsburgh's WQED-TV and later renamed it *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. The program went national in February 1968.

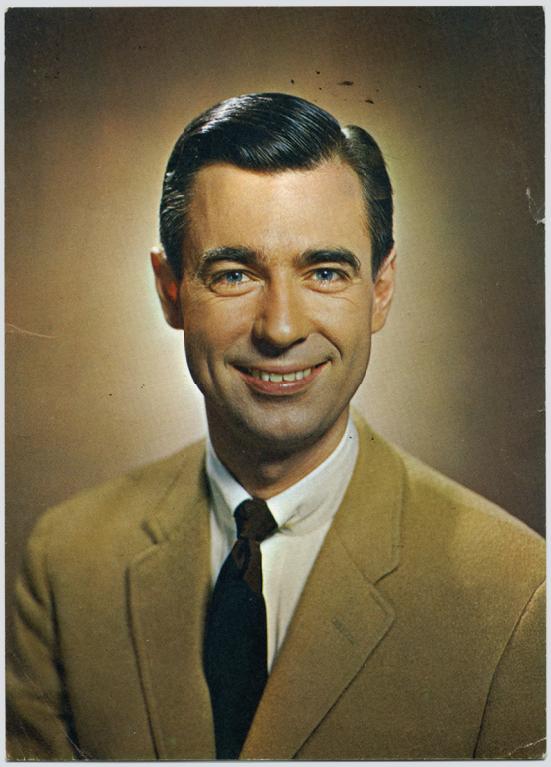
OPPOSITE Hutchings remembers his letters: "I think he sensed in me that I needed reassurance. He was ultrasensitive to people's feelings and the things they could do."

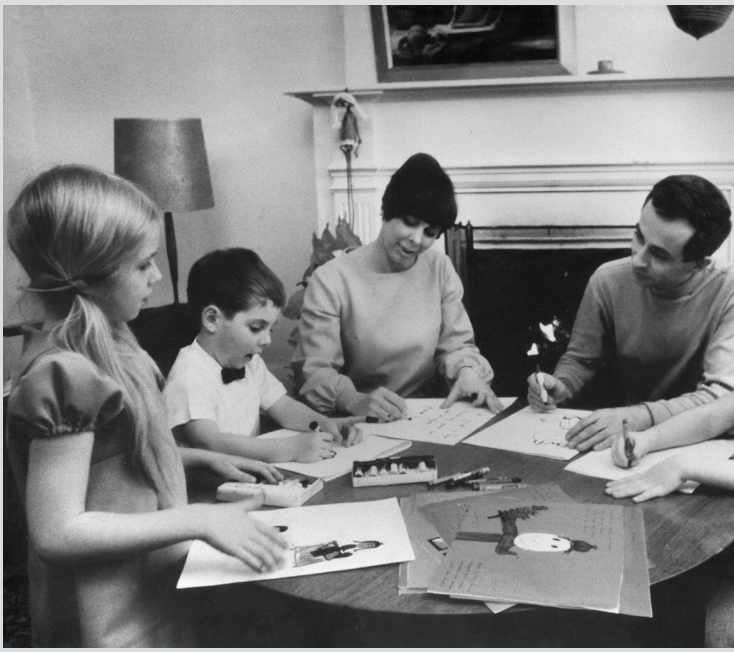
ABOVE Hutchings was named Mrs. Chatelaine in the magazine's May 1968 issue.

PICTURE HER LIFE, starting in the Depression. My mother is born in the 1930s to a working-class immigrant family living in Toronto. Her father is a foreman at Casselman's Wiping Cloths Company, and the couple has three children: two cherished boys and one perhaps not-as-cherished girl. Her name? Diane Hutchings. Not worth a middle name.

Diane gets her high school diploma, teacher's certificate, marriage certificate. But, in the early 1960s, marriage leaves her isolated in a Richmond Hill bungalow. She lacks confidence, but she's a natural creative. She paints, presses flowers, and pens poems—and she teaches her students to be creatives too. A few years later, in 1968, she would win the Mrs. Chatelaine title, an award bestowed by the women's magazine on the best Canadian homemakers. That would give her a dishwasher and a fleeting belief in herself.

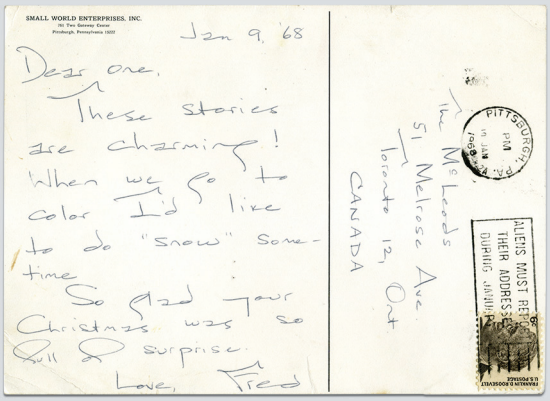
In 1963, Mum, my young siblings, and I sit at the table with paper and crayons, watching the CBC—and that's when we encounter Fred Rogers. The network invited the young American, who had worked on a local children's show in Pittsburgh, to create a new kids program in Canada. Mum describes the segment, featuring Mister Rogers and his land of make-believe, as different from anything she'd seen. "Fred was so quick to pick up on how bad things could become good things for children, no matter what challenges they faced. It was a message I needed to hear too." Then, one day, the show's not there. She writes to the CBC and gives the broadcaster hell.



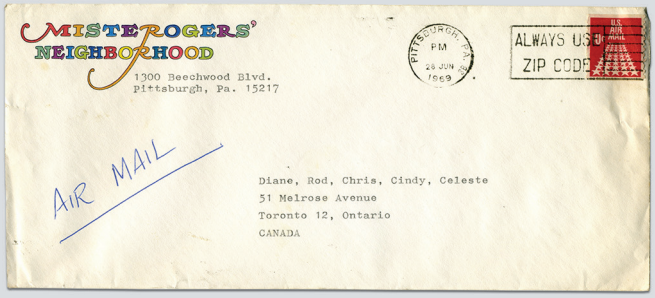


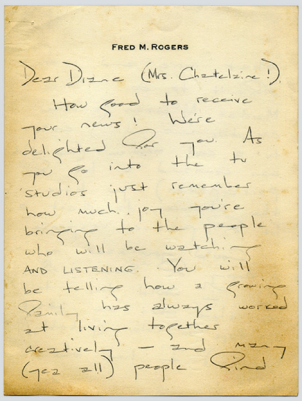
ABOVE Hutchings, her three children (Cinders, Chris, and Celeste), and their father, illustrating her books.

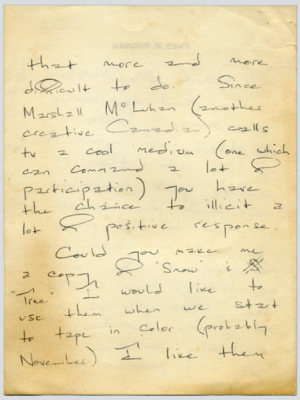
She recalls: "I admired Fred and liked him so terribly—as you love things as a child, like ice cream.... My teaching that year was really good because he connected with the children so they had a reason to write him letters. They did that with a lot of people but none that they enjoyed as much as Mister Rogers."



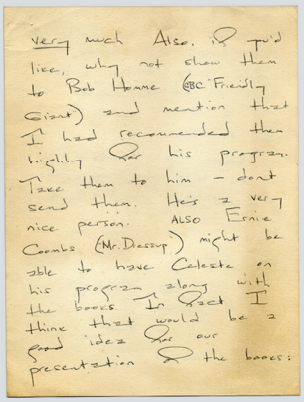
The first episode of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* in colour aired February 10, 1969.

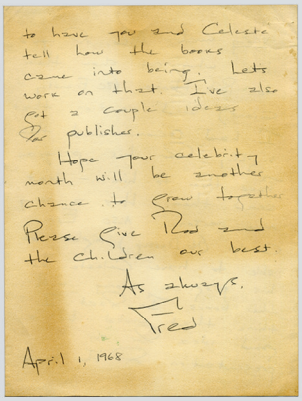






Hutchings won the Mrs. Chatelaine contest on the strength of her creative work. "[Rogers] was the first person I told," she recalls, and he later wrote to congratulate her.



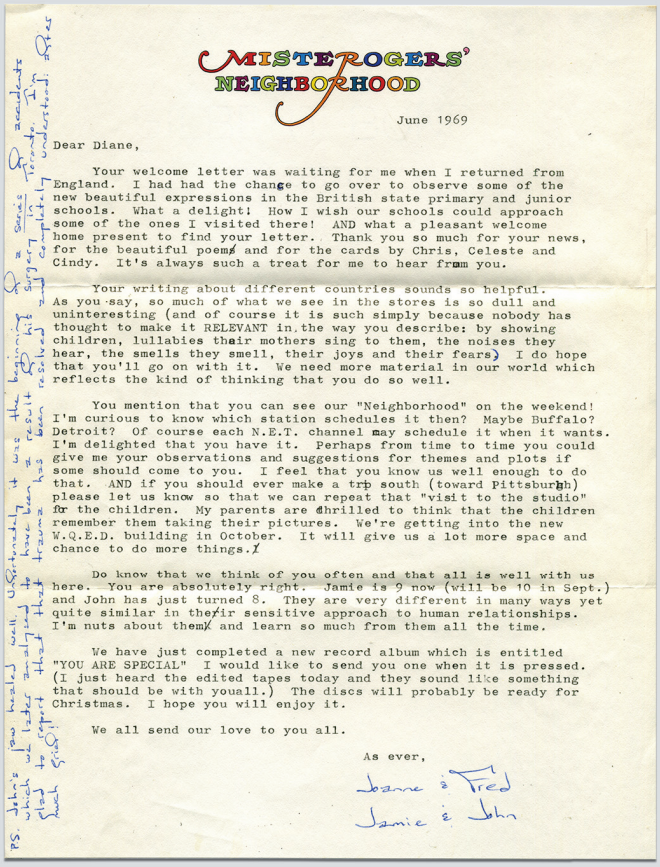


OPPOSITE Rogers encouraged Hutchings to keep writing: "I do hope that you'll go on with it. We need more material in our world which reflects the kind of thinking that you do so well."

Mum remembers Rogers writing back: he'll return after Christmas. And so begins years of correspondence and collaboration. Soon, he invites us all to his CBC set. Mum also shows him her unpublished children's books: *What's a Tree For?*, *What's the Snow For?*, *What's a Friend For?*, etc. In one letter, he asks for copies: "I would like to use them when we start to tape in color (probably November). I liked them very much.…I've also got a couple ideas for publishers."

I didn't know about the letters until I visited Mum in her retirement-home apartment this February and she mentioned she couldn't find them. I remembered the studio visits, but I didn't know that they'd continued to keep in touch.

I searched her closet and, in a box marked "keepers," found some survivors. A few weeks after that, the pandemic took hold and I could no longer visit. Most of our prepandemic phone calls had relied on me carrying the conversation with good news, but now there wasn't much to share. Instead, I crafted questions about her friendship with Mister Rogers before our calls, then methodically asked them until she tired. There were some lonely days for her in lockdown. But I'd hear a change in her voice whenever I mentioned Rogers. He was the man who had recognized her, and her daughter wanted to know that story.



MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD

June 1969

Dear Diane,

Your welcome letter was waiting for me when I returned from England. I had had the chance to go over to observe some of the new beautiful expressions in the British state primary and junior schools. What a delight! How I wish our schools could approach some of the ones I visited there! AND what a pleasant welcome home present to find your letter. Thank you so much for your news, for the beautiful poems and for the cards by Chris, Celeste and Cindy. It's always such a treat for me to hear from you.

Your writing about different countries sounds so helpful. As you say, so much of what we see in the stores is so dull and uninteresting (and of course it is such simply because nobody has thought to make it RELEVANT in the way you describe: by showing children, lullabies their mothers sing to them, the noises they hear, the smells they smell, their joys and their fears). I do hope that you'll go on with it. We need more material in our world which reflects the kind of thinking that you do so well.

You mention that you can see our "Neighborhood" on the weekend! I'm curious to know which station schedules it then? Maybe Buffalo? Detroit? Of course each N.E.T. channel may schedule it when it wants. I'm delighted that you have it. Perhaps from time to time you could give me your observations and suggestions for themes and plots if some should come to you. I feel that you know us well enough to do that. AND if you should ever make a trip south (toward Pittsburgh) please let us know so that we can repeat that "visit to the studio" for the children. My parents are thrilled to think that the children remember them taking their pictures. We're getting into the new W.Q.E.D. building in October. It will give us a lot more space and chance to do more things.

Do know that we think of you often and that all is well with us here. You are absolutely right. Jamie is 9 now (will be 10 in Sept.) and John has just turned 8. They are very different in many ways yet quite similar in their sensitive approach to human relationships. I'm nuts about them and learn so much from them all the time.

We have just completed a new record album which is entitled "YOU ARE SPECIAL" I would like to send you one when it is pressed. (I just heard the edited tapes today and they sound like something that should be with you all.) The discs will probably be ready for Christmas. I hope you will enjoy it.

We all send our love to you all.

As ever,

Jamie & Fred

Jamie & John

In one letter, he suggests she show her books to two CBC children's entertainers: Bob Homme, better known as the Friendly Giant, and Ernie Coombs, who had graduated from being Rogers's puppeteer to being on *Butternut Square*. Perhaps the performers might be interested in reading them on their shows, he writes. By then, he had moved to Pittsburgh, and I like to think he was looking out for her in his absence.

When I asked if she had taken the suggestion, I got a story for an answer. "Ernie was on a show called *Butternut Square*. And I asked my pupils to write him a letter about what they liked best, and they wrote they loved the part where he dressed up. So I sent Ernie all their letters telling him that. And then his own show airs and it's called *Mr. Dressup*." The program went on to become one of Canada's most beloved children's shows. Maybe Mum had something to do with that.

"How good to receive your news!" Rogers wrote when she won Mrs. Chatelaine. "We're delighted for you. As you go into the tv studios just remember how much joy you're bringing to the people who will be watching AND LISTENING. You will be telling how a growing family has always worked at living together creatively.…Since Marshall McLuhan (another creative Canadian) calls tv a cool medium (one which can command a lot of participation) you have the chance to illicit [*sic*] a lot of positive response."

Mum eventually ended a difficult marriage, got a degree at night school, and continued sending her books to publishers. Rogers assumed that becoming Mrs. Chatelaine would catapult her into recognition. It didn't. But it reassures her, to this day, that it was something he thought she deserved. My educated guess is that we can get only so many rejection slips, bills, put-downs, and disappointments before we pack away our dreams in a box marked "keepers."

The day after we first read Rogers's letters, I took Mum to see *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, the 2019 film about Rogers. There's a moment when Tom Hanks asks us to think about the people who helped us become who we are. I looked at Mum. She was crying. She always gets teary when she tells a story about someone believing in someone else. The Group of Seven painter Lawren Harris's belief in Emily Carr, before she became a famous artist herself, is Mum's favourite in this genre. Later, I asked her if Rogers was the Harris to her Carr. "I never thought of it like that before, but yes, I believe he was." Mister Rogers's love and land of make-believe live on.

CINDERS MCLEOD has had her writing and illustrations published in the *Guardian* and the *Globe and Mail* and featured on CBC TV.

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FEATURED ARTIST

Welcome to the Willyverse

William Ukoh photographs a world of leisure and freedom

BY CONNOR GAREL

At first, it's unclear where these people might be. Somewhere tropical, maybe. Somewhere humid. Certainly somewhere fragrant—gardenias, pink lotion, shea butter—and carefree. There, beneath the cosmos, a face's scattered freckles rhyme neatly with the stars. The tallest woman you've ever seen looms high above a city. Huddled closely, a man and a woman pose against a sheet of mottled sky, skin twinkling like all the world's sunshine is trapped behind their faces. As the photographs accumulate, a setting crystallizes: it's a sun-drenched arcadia of leisure and Black beauty, a fictional place thirty-one-year-old photographer William Ukoh calls "the Willyverse." Obviously, the Willyverse doesn't appear on any map, but when asked how he might describe it, Ukoh says only that it's an imagined "midway point between Nigeria and Canada"—his place of birth and adopted homeland, respectively. Otherwise, he would prefer that the viewer made up their own interpretation.

Ukoh, who lives in Toronto, has been building this world since 2016. He has photographed artists and actors for *GQ* and beauty stories for *Vogue Portugal*. He has collaborated with fashion designers and exhibited in galleries across New York, Lagos, Toronto, and Amsterdam. All the while, he has refused to make a distinction between his fine art and his commercial work, preferring instead to see it all as the moving parts of one self-contained universe, a place that expands with each new image. "There's definitely a surreal element to the world," he says.

There's also a sense of ease, joy, and serenity. The colours are vivid and saturated, the weather uninterruptedly warm. Most of Ukoh's subjects are Black, which is less a radical approach to art than it is the natural ethos of a man who grew up on the mainland stretch of Nigeria's capital, surrounded by people he saw himself in. "It wasn't until recently that I started to ask myself how growing up in that environment affects how I approach my work," he says. Ukoh spent the better part of his childhood playing in his family's Lagos apartment, furnished with his mother's ever-growing collection of wooden sculptures, traditional African masks, and prints of High Renaissance paintings. He often occupied himself by watching anime and cartoons—limitless worlds, he says, where "there were zero consequences." When he wasn't watching these programs, the sound of his mother watching fashion television would fill the living room. All these fragments of childhood background noise have come to guide his practice.

Ukoh is self-taught. Photography was an accident. In 2013, he was studying computer science at McMaster University when, one day, his sister brought home a DSLR camera she had been supplied for a course. Intrigued, Ukoh took a few experimental pictures and fell in love. He bought a bulky Sony Alpha 350 and began a BFA in film—a decision made partly out of a desire to immerse himself in storytelling, partly out of the fear that, were he to pursue photography directly, the academy might spoil his natural passion for the medium.

Like many young Black photographers without connections in the art world, Ukoh forwent traditional channels by tailoring his photos for Instagram, where they gained attention. There's a sense that his images are in conversation with

OPENING PAGE
Facet (2019)
OPPOSITE
Untitled (2020)
BELOW
Coulture (2018)

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

the work of other young artists, like Tyler Mitchell, whose photographs employ the language of suburbia to imagine an Eden for young Black Americans. But, when asked to identify his influences, Ukoh cites Richard Avedon and Nick Knight: legendary image-makers whose mastery of portrait photography—intimate and humanistic, otherworldly and narrative driven—came to define America's conception of beauty and style in the latter half of the twentieth century. This genre of fashion photography still tends to privilege a Eurocentric fantasy of beauty: pale girls, bright eyes, thin noses. But Ukoh's vision seems to reflect his own private understanding of what, and who, is beautiful.

Though he never uses the word *utopia* to describe his art, Ukoh has used *escape*. In the real world, Blackness has been perennially haunted by the threat of racist violence. But, in Ukoh's images, leisure appears to supplant the abject. He thinks freedom can be achieved only with the total annihilation of fear. Two summers ago, when I first interviewed Ukoh, he told me, "I feel like freedom is a state I'm always chasing." Today, he says, this still holds true. Using 3D-modelling software, he stitches together the real and the imaginary, blending his photographs with digitally rendered settings. "You're never really sure if this is an actual location or something that was created in post-production," he says.

Fiction tells the truth. Those with the clearest vision of the world, of its blunders and its failures, often pitch themselves into fantasy to break free from claustrophobic limitations. It's precisely this practice that lends Ukoh's images their allure and their honesty. Imagined and manipulated as they might be, his tranquil scenes offer a lucid commentary on our own material universe: a place that can be survived only by clinging to hope, that fragile thing, the only thing we have.

CONNOR GAREL writes about culture. His work has appeared in BuzzFeed, *Canadian Art*, *Fashion*, and *Vice*.

ABOVE Stills from *Najma & Marv* (2020)
BELOW Stills from *Portrait of an Afro-Indigenous Poet* (2020)
OPPOSITE *Tilt*, from the collection *Loza Maléombho SS18* (2017)

The Future Lives Here

BY SHAUN ROBINSON

I spent the summer copiloting a pickup
though Surrey, trying to interpret
a binder of ancient Parks Board maps—
impossible, in a city whose motto
was "The Future Lives Here."
Where the map showed a cornfield,
we found a full-grown subdivision,
four-storey townhouses repeating
like wallpaper, the same swing set
and toppled big wheel in every yard.
It didn't help that Garret, my boss,
popped ephedrine to stay awake
and only knew east from west
by tapping out "Never Eat Shredded Wheat"
on the wheel. From seven to four
we hopped from park to park to loop
rubber mats around the trunks of city trees.
The mats smelled like the insides
of galoshes and had to do with mowers
or moisture retention or something.
I didn't mind the work, but Garret
never shut up except to dribble chew
into a Big Gulp cup between his knees,
rambling in a sports-bar grammar
of hockey fights and hangovers. At twenty-nine,
he had two kids by different women.
The longest he'd ever been faithful
was to an annual pass at the gym.
I couldn't believe I'd moved to the city
to be trapped in a truck
with this Prince George hick,
a dead ringer for every man I'd known
in seventeen small-town years.
So why did I meet him every Friday
at a downtown pub to sip from
seven-dollar pitchers and listen
to his lectures on real estate
or his Keno system while sighting
down his cue at a gridlock
of stripes and solids? Something always
went wrong, an eight that refused
to go down or light up, but he swore
one day he'd run the table
and haul his winnings to Costa Rica.
I couldn't stand to hear him talk
about the future as if it existed,
but it was better than my tiny apartment,
twilight guttering in the slice
of sky you could see from my only window,
framed by towers that threatened
to extinguish everything. If only
I could have spent my nights
in the calm of the moment after we'd set
the final mat of the day:
the sod cut away and replaced
with a black circle, the grass and soil
swept off, three staples to hold it
in place. The moment it all fit together
as if I'd never been there.

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TELEVISION

Consider the Beaver

The enduring influence of Hinterland Who's Who

BY TOM JOKINEN
ILLUSTRATION BY MELINDA JOSIE

If there's a golden age of Canadian television, it may be found in a series of public service announcements from the 1960s and '70s, each lasting no more than a minute. The *Hinterland Who's Who* spots told stories of the animals that live here: the northern gannet, the loon, the moose. Canadians of all ages, from Toronto to Moncton to Portage la Prairie, were tapped lightly on the shoulder and asked to notice, maybe even think about, the country's wildlife heritage. *Ever seen a beaver?* the program asked. *Well, look, here's one now on your television.*

These short documentaries, a joint project between the Canadian Wildlife Service and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), were first launched in 1963 and aired during commercial breaks ad nauseam. They were formally simple and utterly unironic. The voice-overs, courtesy of John Livingston, then executive director of the Audubon Society of Canada, were full of tidbits and trivia. Livingston's monologues came across as untrained, almost accidental—he was every sweater-vested social studies teacher in every high school across the country. But there was an alchemy at work, and *Hinterland* added up to a national poetry of origin, like the Icelandic sagas or the Finnish Kalevala:

> The beaver builds dams
> because he has to store his
> winter's food.
> For a more complete story of
> the beaver,
> why not contact the Canadian
> Wildlife Service,
> in Ottawa?

Thirty-six *Hinterland* films were created between 1963 and 1977, and they have since been rebroadcast and rebooted, youtubed and parodied. Those who gave up cable long ago can likely still recognize the theme music: a flute song that mimics the call of the loon and manages to persist, fifty years on, as a weapons-grade earworm. There's a staying power here, and it lies somewhere between *Hinterland*'s triviality and its symbolism. The clips are not so much lacking in entertainment as they are a form of *anti*entertainment. They also mark the moment before the dam burst and Canada was flooded with brash American television, from *Three's Company* to *Cops* through to *The Masked Singer*. Looking at *Hinterland Who's Who* today, one can't help but feel there's something aspirational in this relic of dull Canadiana found among a highly spiced media diet, some value in its lack of flavour. But what?

Andrew Burke, an associate professor at the University of Winnipeg who specializes in film and television, looks for an answer in *Hinterland Remixed: Media, Memory and the Canadian 1970s*, a book that focuses on the period in Canadian history that he calls "the long '70s," stretching from the centennial year of 1967 well into the eighties. (Culture so rarely follows a tight chronology.) Burke's subject is not so much the serious arts but the ephemera, in particular those short public service announcements devoted to Canada's critters.

Though the *Hinterland* spots are a specific cultural artifact, Burke pinpoints them as an emblem of Canadian identity in a world before the internet and globalization. They were *ours*—they could never have happened in America. "The *Hinterland* series," he writes, "was the product of a liberal democratic state and corresponding broadcast ecosystem that now seems resolutely part of the past."

In other words, the *Hinterland* spots did, and still do, recall a different reality. They were media that had no intention

SOURCE IMAGE COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

of being popular. They did not chase ratings or provoke adrenalin; they were television for our own good, like dry socks on an overland hike. They were un-American insofar as they reeked of a common benefit (to save the outside world from being paved over) and of an activist (if paternalistic) central government of benign bureaucratic moms and dads. These things, Burke suggests, are gone, and oddly, they are missed. Fifty years on, the *Hinterland* clips, that brief moment of daring to be un-American, on TV, for all to see, seems more and more subversive—and more attractive. Canadians can look back at the 1970s and say that, just for a brief spell, we were different from the Americans. Not better: different.

The 1970s marked a crossroads of sorts for media in Canada. The decade was a heyday for unambitious homegrown television, including a game show in which six middle-aged people played charades in a fake Hamilton living room (*Party Game*), a vagabond dog who solved crimes (*The Littlest Hobo*), and a crusty but benign salvage operator hauling the remnants of large-scale logging operations from the coastal waters of British Columbia (*The Beachcombers*).

Canada was tinkering with the BBC model of public broadcasting, in which collective values held a place. This led to tension with American electronic manifest destiny. As broadcast technology improved, cable, then satellite, brought even more US television to the ribbon of population along the border and as far as the Arctic. It was *The Streets of San Francisco*, with its thrilling car chases, versus *Hinterland Who's Who*'s ode to chipmunks. "I think this kind of programming is extremely important," wildlife artist Robert Bateman recently said about the latter. "Especially for youth, because there is a dreadful trend toward 'being cool.'" Most TV ads, he says, encouraged consumerism. The *Hinterland* ads encouraged people to send in for brochures about *Castor canadensis*.

But this still doesn't explain the heft, even today, associated with *Hinterland*. Burke digs deeper. "Even though they were made to promote conservation," he writes, "the *Hinterland Who's Who* films are strangely elegiac in tone, capturing the decade's anxieties about ecological catastrophe. They convey a sense of living, to reference the title of a 1970 Neil Young song, 'after the gold rush,' in an age when mother nature is in peril."

There is, in these innocent little bird films, a reckoning, an acknowledgement: *we are messing things up*. This was not a feature of most North American media back then, and aside from the welcome aberration that is David Attenborough, there still isn't much of it to be found today. The *Hinterland* spots may have seemed dull, but in retrospect, they were alarm bells. Cultural artifacts such as these—seen as cute, corny, amateur, out of touch—now hold "a certain power," according to Burke, as "a reminder that meaningful change was once thought possible and that political intervention, even by the state itself, was understood to be a positive thing." You can't imagine them coming from a privatized America built to promote shareholder value. They could come only from public broadcasting, public money, outside the marketplace, where there's no payoff except that those who grew up with them might be less inclined to destroy the planet.

The American myth, its *Odyssey*, is one of conquest, from manifest destiny (at the expense of the Great Sioux Nation, among so many others) to the global frontier today (at the expense of the working people). In mainstream American entertainment, there's been little appetite to stop and take stock, to honestly reckon with sins like slavery and Jim Crow. The chipper dream rules: police procedurals, talent showcases, three-act real-estate-slash-home-renovation reality dramas, all celebrating individual gumption and conquest at someone else's expense. There are exceptions, of course, like ABC's *Roots*, HBO's *The Wire*, or FX's *Atlanta*, which concern themselves with deconstructing national myths. But, in broad strokes, American stories promote American (white) exceptionalism. And this is the buffet from which Canadians have fed, and which we have attempted to replicate, for the past four decades.

From the 1980s on, our television began to copy our neighbour's: *Danger Bay*, *Da Vinci's Inquest*, and even *Trailer Park Boys* would all have fit comfortably in an American lineup. Of course, this was the point: commerce approves of homogeneity. Today, the big ticket on the CBC is a franchised version of *Family Feud*: same set, same double entendres. It's like a Walmart store in Sudbury, not much different from another in Milwaukee. It's only by looking at the past that we can find traces of a Canada that might have been.

Burke doesn't say it, but I will: *Hinterland Who's Who* was subversive, socialist, antifascist. Yes, it was sixty seconds devoted to the cougar, black duck, or woodchuck, but conceptually, it was nothing short of radical. These insights into the natural world were programming for the common good. They asked us to think twice about how our society defines progress and about the consequences of our actions. In a way, *Hinterland Who's Who* stood up to the American noise and asked Canadians to pay attention to what was going on in our own backyards. Problem: we didn't.

Early in *Hinterland Remixed*, Burke talks about a phrase that repeats in a 2002 song by the electronic duo Boards of Canada: "The past inside the present." Burke notes that the line stuck with him, circled around his head. The musicians, who lived briefly in Calgary during the late seventies, were influenced by the trippy NFB videos they were made to watch in school. They adapted the music, all those bleeps and bloops, into their own work. "Mid-tempo beats," writes Burke, "combine with samples sourced from educational films and children's programming to produce an altogether *unsettling* listening experience" (italics mine). This is not nostalgia but something darker, a kind of retroactive apprehension of a lost opportunity.

As the late British writer Mark Fisher wrote (and Burke quotes): "The 1970s were in many respects better than neoliberalism wants us to remember

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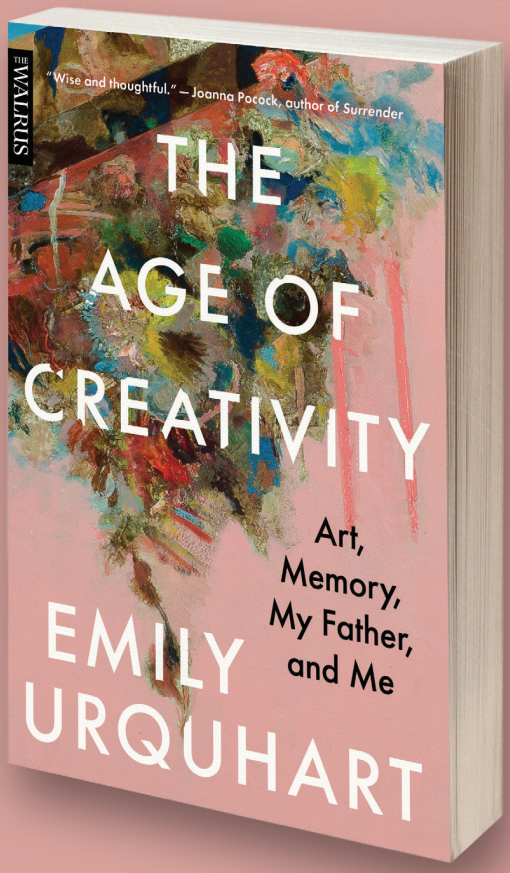

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Dumpster

BY RUSSELL THORNTON

Everything is marrying everything again.
You can smell it—
the waste overflowing the dumpster.
The thrown bouquet,
the glittering eyes, the grins,
the lucky couple,
the guests posing for photos—
it all comes back
in the plastic garbage bags heavy with slop.
Here in the dark,
within a large metal box,
the wedding vows are being taken again
in chemical utterances,
the *I do*'s purer here
than in any other ceremony.
Now the men come with carts,
prop open the dumpster lid,
and begin their search
for cans and bottles.
It may happen
that scraps
of a tiered cake turn up.
Seagulls and crows
whirl around the men's heads like angels,
and they flap and hop
around the men's feet
as they come down the lane
crying divorce
from dumpster to dumpster.
But everything is marrying again,
couple upon couple
is marrying again
within the rot,
and the men who live on the rot,
who pick through
the wedding waste,
and cash in the refundables
to get high,
are marrying everything
again and again
within themselves.
When the truck
wide as the lane arrives
and a driver works controls
to lift and empty this dumpster,
the men scatter
like seagulls and crows,
take off pushing their carts
rattling like skeletons,
hurry away with their loot like time.

them." Canada is no different: to see our seventies as a provincial dead zone is to buy into a conservative political agenda that argues we are much better off now, with Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Canadian *Family Feud*, than we ever were with *The Beachcombers* and *Hinterland Who's Who*. Fisher's point is that his country, the United Kingdom, spent the late 1970s on the verge of a modernized welfare state, with a strong social safety net, progressive labour policies, and an eye to attacking inequality. Then came Margaret Thatcher. This half-realized, half-dreamed nostalgia for the culture of the 1970s (in Fisher's case, for do-gooder public service programming served on Channel 4) is nostalgia for utopia, a future that never quite happened.

In *Hinterland Remixed*, Burke's concern with the 1970s is not him pining for the past, a period when Canadian media stood up, for possibly the last time, against American media, David-and-Goliath style. Rather, the long decade haunts us: it coaxes us into remembering a moment when the larger culture cared about community and cared about the environment. This era was in no way perfect: its media saw the world through a very white, very suburban lens. But it was a moment when television wasn't obsessed with the commercial, the spectacle, the lowest common denominator. If *Hinterland Who's Who* was able to cast such a long shadow, what other stories—what other country—could we have had if only we'd created a more just media landscape in its image?

"What remains of the '70s today," Burke writes, "are its traces, transported into the present by obsolete media formats: video, and analog photography." These artifacts, he says, "circulate a larger sense of what the decade was like, what it was about." Burke shows that these bits of history are neither dead nor dormant and that the spirit of *Hinterland* can live on in new work today. He highlights *The Indigenous Archival Photo Project*: curated images of family and community by Paul Seesequasis, who searches through archives to find old pictures, mostly taken by outsiders, of Indigenous people going about their lives throughout the twentieth century. When he started the project, many of the photos lacked identification and context, so Seesequasis brought them to the internet with a question: Who is shown here? It didn't take long for the images to spread, and the audience began identifying cousins and grandmothers and friends. In an interview with *Vice*, Seesequasis said he was inspired by a conversation he had with his mother, who "longed to hear more positive stories." The pictures carry a double context: this is what we missed by precluding Indigenous experiences from our national conversations, these are the stories that far too many in our country—audiences, creators, and public broadcasters alike—have spent decades ignoring.

Hinterland reminds us of when woodland critters were a big, fat metaphor for correcting our mistakes now, before things get even worse.

What could the next fifty years of Canadian media look like? If we're smart, we'll reconsider the past. There's that haunting voice repeating "the past inside the present," reminding us of a time when we almost paid attention to social good; when homegrown media could counterbalance propaganda from the south; when woodland critters were a big, fat metaphor for correcting our national mistakes now, before things get even worse. The *Hinterland Who's Who* spots, for all their blunt cheesiness, now feel subversive because they remind us, half a century on, of the radical Canada they imagined. They recall the country we didn't get, at least not yet. 🦝

TOM JOKINEN is a writer based in Winnipeg. He frequently contributes to the *Globe and Mail* and CBC Radio.

FIRST PERSON

One Last Nightcap

Even in his eighties, my father dared the rest of us to keep up

BY ANNE O'HAGAN

It's early afternoon and humid as my father and I enter the Rogers Centre, well in advance of the first pitch. "I like to see them warm up," he told me, no leeway offered. I'm anxious to find our seats. The stadium can be a vast, forbidding obstacle course, and my father's gait, at eighty-eight, is halting, his breath laboured. I imagine him slipping on slopped beer, being jostled, even trampled by the crowd. For me, this is nerve-racking. Not for him. He's driven, as always, and won't be denied.

My father's relationship with sports was immersive. As with politics, it was a lifelong commitment. "Dick" to friends, he was a serious man who served two prime ministers, represented his country in Washington for a decade, and spent the rest of his career advising bank presidents. But baseball, football, and hockey were his abiding loves. He was also not fanatical. "Who are you for?" I'd ask, finding him in the study, consumed with the screen. I don't think he cared. More than anything, he was a student of the game.

Our seats are above the visiting Boston Red Sox's dugout, in a section reserved for "guests of the organization." The diamond radiates, it glows: high-definition baseball. As each runner hits home plate, my father cheers and strains to rise. It's not enough for him to be at the game; he needs to engage. Young men seated beside him break focus, take note, and reflexively, courteously offer him an arm up. Our exit strategy preoccupies me. I'm on my phone looking at Uber pick-up locations. He flags down the beer guy.

Following the Red Sox was a given for him, in no small part due to The Great Fenway Park Writers Series. A curiosity in today's hero-worshipping sports culture—a literary salon sponsored by a professional sports team, the only one of its kind—it was founded by Dad's great friend of five decades, George Mitrovich. They grew close in the 1970s, working on Capitol Hill, and discovered their interests aligned: politics, public service, sports, and writing. George Plimpton was invited to speak. So was humorist Roy Blount Jr., sports columnist Bob Ryan, and historian Richard Reeves. Senator Elizabeth Warren appeared, as did Gloria Steinem. Baseball: the thinking person's game.

Dad played sports, too, but he thought about them more. At sixteen, he pitched an idea for a column to the *Woodstock Sentinel Press*, his hometown paper. The editors agreed to take him on. "Sports Scope" became his self-styled apprenticeship and his first media platform. With no apparent shortage of adjectives and opinions, Dad succeeded in putting the world on notice (or the Saint John River Valley, at least) of where he was headed. So his dedication to sports and writing developed in parallel, tent poles of his life.

November 2015: we're in New York for Thanksgiving en famille. Dad's eldest granddaughter, Madeleine, is both his kindred spirit and a New York Rangers fan. She arranges tickets for us to see her team take on the Montreal Canadiens at Madison Square Garden. A cross-border family, we sing both anthems with fervour but remain divided on favourites to win. Throughout the game, Maddy dances attendance on her grandfather—"Another beer? A hot dog?"—thrilled that he's still up for such outings at his age. Afterward, all of us exhausted, we trek out to Thirty-Fourth Street and taxi to the Colony Club on Park Avenue, my parents' Manhattan home base. Maddy helps Dad out of the car—no small initiative—and up the stone stairs. We wait at the curb until he disappears through the club's august black double doors.

At lunch the next day, Dad mentions the bar at the Regency Hotel, the nightcap he had there, and his good fortune to have caught the last set of some "excellent jazz." Maddy and I look at each other, confused. "When—last night? After we dropped you?" He nods, understated as ever. "You know, it's just down Park," he adds, as if its location made his post–hockey game nightcap any less surprising. In our minds, identical thoughts: his shortness of breath traversing the Garden the night before; his stiff, rickety legs ascending the club steps; our relief at seeing the doorman usher him inside for the night and to bed with his wife, safe and sound. "Very good piano player at the Regency," he says again. Student of the game, yes. But also a master of how to live a life. ♪

ANNE O'HAGAN is a writer and book consultant.

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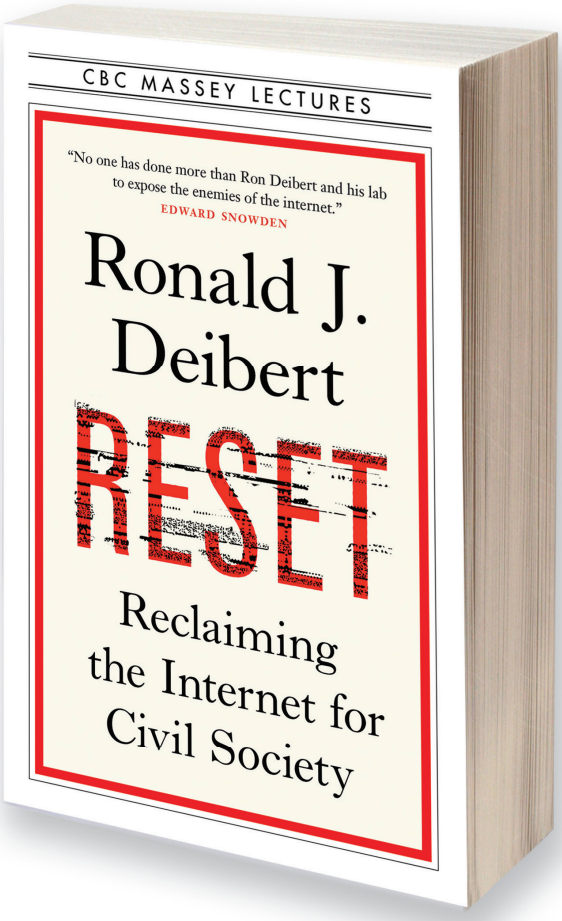

Bestselling author and renowned technology and security expert Ronald J. Deibert exposes the disturbing influence and impact of the internet on politics, the economy, the environment, and humanity.

"*Reset* is a road map revealing the secret alleys and byways that brought us to this juncture, and the ways ahead that we could navigate to a better future."

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