

# Time and Place

## a cultural anthology



We are all of a particular time and place. The space we occupy influences who we are, what we think, how we act, re-act, and what we create. **Time and Place** is about capturing the creativity of a particular moment of the artist's life.

There are no restrictions as to subject matter or content (the right not to accept a contribution is reserved, mind you.) Each contribution must have an accompanying paragraph detailing the significance of the time and place you were in when the piece was inspired, created, formed, birthed, or otherwise captured, along with a brief biography.

Copyright remains with the artist or writer.

Please send your submissions to: [timeandplacesubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:timeandplacesubmissions@gmail.com)

Please submit only one item for consideration. **Multiple submissions will not be considered.**

Contribution guidelines:

Writing: Words of any type (prose, poetry, fiction, non-fiction,) **no more than 1000.**

Art: Acceptable formats are PC compatible (.tif, hi-res .jpg, .pdf, 300 dpi.)

Photography: Colour, Black and White (.tif, hi-res .jpg, .pdf, 300 dpi.)

*Editor: Ed Shaw and Jeff Griffiths*

*Cover photo: Ed Shaw, Hamilton Cemetery, Hamilton, Ontario, April 2021*

# TIME AND PLACE

a cultural quarterly



## **I Am an Octopus Adorabilis**

I am an Octopus adorabilis. I am nocturnal because I am afraid of my own shadow.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. My small, condo windows face a woodlot so I can hide in a fifty-foot kelp forest at the bottom of the Antarctic ocean.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. I am cute, pink, and at the bottom of the food chain. A sand sifter looking for leftovers because there's no way I'm hunting.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. My unfriendly coworkers also look like Leopard seals.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. My kindness is taken for weakness. No one negotiates with bottom-feeders.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. I swim near bright, coral communities with other-looking fish, which is why I took up painting.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. My flapjack ears help me to navigate and wave at people.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. My own kind is easy to spot. It's how I make friends.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. I explore the ocean floor alone or in good company.

I am an Octopus adorabilis. The ocean lends me its secrets that I later write down.

*Dominic Leah Conda is a member of the Horror Writers Association with a fascination for all things lost and forgotten. She likes guiding her readers to haunted places . . . and then abandoning them there.*

*This project however was inspired by her nephew's little ocean playmate set and written under the guidance of instructor Kathy Friedman (MFA) at the University of Guelph.*

*Sally Cooper*

## March 2020

Two weeks into lockdown you are asked what you miss.

You took your last swimming lesson at the downtown Y on a Tuesday night after dropping your daughters off at ballet. You shared a lane with another woman. You each had a lifeguard coach to yourself. Since November, you'd been training for a triathlon scheduled at an Ontario lake for cold early June. Going into training, you thought you knew how to swim but couldn't do a lap in freestyle without lungs burning, chest heaving. You miss your body immersed, propelling itself through the water, learning to use your hips to kick. Your blue cap. Your goggles.

“Don’t use chickpea flour in your energy bars,” you emailed your triathlete partner. “They taste awful.” She countered with a swimming video and a recipe for a spray to lift the chlorine stench off your skin. You debated whether to buy or rent wetsuits. Your former-lifeguard brother said, “Tape your fingers together to improve your stroke,” to you who’d failed Beginners swimming so often you dropped out. You devoured books like *Women who Tri*, *Finding Ultra* and *Your First Triathlon* and talked running numbers with another friend, a marathon veteran, who gave you his hydration backpack to wear on runs.

You charted your progress in a bullet journal, had a gym coach and trained six days a week. You miss your muscular fit body and the fear, you even miss that, because it was tangible, about something you were choosing to do, an event you had placed in your life in the disconsolate months after losing your athletic father to cancer. You feared the lake swim: getting kicked, running out of energy, dying. Drowning topped your list of fears, you knew the odds. At 16, you'd witnessed a death-by-heart attack in a lake. Your own list of near-drowns started with sinking to the bottom of your neighbours' pool at five-years-old. So you'd strategized with your swim coach: breaststroke until you're clear of other swimmers' limbs then switch to freestyle. You did speed trials and covered four laps in 2:45. You needed to learn how to breathe, when to glide. Take a beat to catch your breath.

You had it all to look forward to, all to do daily. Fifteen months later the possibility shimmers, distant, what you might have done and don't know now if you ever will do.

*Sally Cooper writes novels, essays and screenplays. Her third novel, *With My Back to the World*, is available now. She is the writer-in-residence at the Cotton Factory in Hamilton, Ontario.*

*Virginia Ashbury*

## **How I got to University**

About 25 years ago I was sitting at my kitchen counter, obsessing over a weird feeling in my legs... and being a devout hypochondriac, I decided that perhaps I had a blood clot... and maybe I was going to die in my sleep that night.

So what I did was - I took out a piece of paper - grabbed a pen - then wrote a note to my family and friends:  
It went something like this:

*I have a strange feeling in my legs tonight. Maybe I am going to die.*

*And if I do die....*

*DO NOT MOURN ME.*

*You all know how difficult my early life was.*

*I've always joked I expected to be dead before I turned 27.  
But, to this day I'm surprised that didn't happen, and even more surprised by what did.*

*Yeah, don't mourn me.*

*I have achieved more than I ever thought possible.*

*I have good friends.*

*And I have a university degree, and because of that education:  
I have a good paying job. A nice condo. I've started travelling the world.*

*And I've finally started writing ...and even been published!*

*So,*

*Anything more - will - just - be - more.  
And because of that:*

*There is no reason to mourn.*

I left the note on the counter and went to bed, then got up in the morning just fine.

So,

To recap...I never thought all this great stuff could happen to me.

But let me tell you about just one of these achievements... how I got to university.

In the spring of 1979 I moved to Peterborough and started life as a single mom with 3 young kids. As soon as we got settled into an apartment, I joined the Peterborough chapter of the "One Parent Family Association". Almost all of us were women on 'mother's allowance', managing on monthly income that would be okay if it was only needed to cover half a month.

I needed more education to get a good paying job.

In high school I took Business and Commerce, but totally sucked at all of my business subjects. Good grades in other courses enabled me to scrape by with a pass each year. So now, ten years after high school, I figured my only option was to take a certificate course in Business Admin at the local Community College. What else could I do?

At one of the One Parent meetings, the President made an announcement about a high-school refresher course at the downtown campus of Peterborough's community college. Might be a good idea I figured.

The downtown campus for prep classes was not like the big shiny purpose-built structure outside the town center, where full time important courses were...no, it was an old former factory, chopped up and re-purposed into a labyrinth of hallways and classrooms.

But what a thrill it was ...coming back to school as an adult, with other adults, who actually wanted to be there and who supported each other. Everything was easier than I remembered...but to be fair, there were no business subjects...just Math and English.

The looming prospect of Business College next Fall sickened me.

One day, just after Easter, near the end of the refresher course, I headed into the main floor entrance of the school to a rotunda lit by skylights. And there, leaning against the huge pillar that defined the center of the room - lit by a shaft of light - was a tall woman, about my age, with long dark hair. She was surrounded by a dozen other women who looked small in her presence. They were excited, adoring, almost fawning as she answered their quick questions.

I lingered near the edge of the circle. All I could glean from snippets I could catch was that this woman had been in class with the others, but had progressed much further.

Then, suddenly the dozen women dispersed and I was startled to find myself standing alone before the tall woman. She stared right at me, and in a strong voice demanded: "So, what are you going to do after you are done here?"

"I guess I'll go to the main campus and take Business Admin" I replied in a small voice.

"You don't want to do that", she stated. Like she was reading my mind.

"Well, no, but..."

"You should go to University!" she declared.

"But I can't, I don't have grade 13." (And maybe I can fly to the moon I thought).

"Yes you can...you go as a mature student. Just call Trent tomorrow. Tell them that you want to see an Admissions Counsellor. They will do a short interview, then you start as a mature student".

All I could think of was to say yes. Then she strode away.

The next day I called the University.

My appointment was booked for the next week. I was told to bring my high school transcript.

I called my old High School in Etobicoke. The office secretary almost screeched when I told her my name and what I wanted.

I remember you Virginia! I just noticed the other day that we still have your transcript here in the safe. I'll put it in the mail to you today."

So, the next week, I went out to the University, talked to a young man for about five minutes, and was told that I could take one course on probation that summer. If I got a "C" or better, then my probation would be lifted.

I took Soc. 101 that summer.

In late August I drove out to the campus office to get my grade results.

With shaking hands and a strong knot in my stomach, I took the envelope and walked to the side exit. Standing there, under an unbelievably beautiful sky that I clearly remember to this day, bright blue - with rippled clouds - I opened the envelope and read the statement at the bottom of the single sheet:

“Probation Cleared”.

*This is a story of pure Serendipity. I believe that at least 90% of us experience an event of this sort at least once in our lives. The other 10% just didn't recognize it when it happened.... but it did.*

*Virginia Ashberry started writing in 2001. Her short fiction and non-fiction has been published in Time and Place, Front and Centre, The Saranac Review, Life Rattle Press and Podcasts as well as various Anthologies. She relocated to Hamilton Ontario in 2013 and is thrilled to find herself in the midst of this dynamic arts community.*

*Scot Cameron*

# Paris



In 2019 my wife and I travelled to France to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Arriving in Paris on the red-eye, we rushed to the hotel to find out our room was not ready. We left our bags at the hotel and off we went - two excited tourists exploring the city of love.

Being a photographer in a new place, I'm taking photos of everything I see. I have every type of photo you would expect from a tourist or shutterbug visiting France. Why is a vehicle parked in the street, or a police car, or a door far more extraordinary than at home?

One of my favorite images from our trip is of this tiny woman sitting in the shade taking a moment to escape the hot sun on a typical Parisian street, a scene likely found all over the city that summer. I love the contrast between the crazy jetlagged tourists in awe of every little thing, and this person completely impartial to her surroundings.

The woman offers something artistic to the photo, elevating it from a common Paris streetscape, but she also offers an emotional anchor. It is rare that one of my photos is both visually appealing and so simply captures a moment.

*Scot Cameron is a writer, photographer and skater. He lives and plays in Waterdown with his wife and two kids.*

## Rose

*I knew an old lady who swallowed a fly, I don't know why she swallowed a fly. Perhaps she'll die.*

Rose lived in a retirement home. It smelled like pee, hand sanitizer, and old people. Every step towards her apartment made anxiety swell in my chest. This is where people came to die.

Rose was a tiny, frail old woman. Her voice was quiet and unassuming. My mother told me she is a person really worth knowing, that she's easy to like.

I did not want to meet Rose the old lady in this house of death, but I really didn't have much of a choice. I was out with my mother getting lunch when she got the call from Rose. I felt like a toddler, obediently following my mother into a situation I didn't want to be in.

Rose was smart though. When her body was failing her, her mind was not. Where her voice was quiet, her opinions weren't, and it was easy to have conversations with her.

Since that first day I spent as much time with Rose as I could. Every moment is precious because she's still there, still kicking, still smiling and feeling and crying and laughing, but every moment her body fails her a little more. It's like watching a car crash, but there is even less I can do about it. I took first aid, I know CPR and how to treat wounds until paramedics arrive. Rose is way past all that. There is no 'first' in the aid she needs. The doctors have already seen her and the prognosis is grim. It's only getting worse.

I don't know how to distance myself from it. I don't know how I'll move on when it's over.

*I knew an old lady who swallowed a spider. It wiggled and jiggled and tickled inside her.*

I'm not so concerned with the smell of the retirement home anymore. It doesn't seem important. I try to focus on the fact that, while it's mostly beige, it doesn't feel like a hospital. The food is fantastic, there's pictures and paintings everywhere, and there's a tree just outside Rose's window. It's really not that bad of a place to be in when you get used to the smell.

Rose is deteriorating quickly. Yesterday she could eat on her own, but today she needs help. She shakes with every step and is exhausted when she gets to her chair. Her mind is still there but that just means she knows exactly what is happening to her. Her body is giving up the ghost and there's nothing to do about it. Every day is a slow shakey step towards the inevitable and I'm not sure I can watch anymore.

The sky is dark grey. It's raining, and the tree outside the window has lost its leaves. I feel it like a physical thing.

I don't cry about it in front of her. I grin and bear it and talk about anything else. It's the most I say to anyone all week. I don't lie to her, but I don't tell the truth either. Seeing her fade is eating me away and I can't do it anymore. I'm a coward. I'm a sucker for happy endings and this story doesn't have one.

*I knew an old lady who swallowed a bird, how absurd to swallow a bird.*

I haven't seen Rose in weeks. My mother tells me she's doing fine, but I find that hard to believe.

I don't ask how she's doing anymore. I figure no news is good news.

*I knew an old lady who swallowed a cat. I don't know why she would do that.*

No news is not always good news. Rose is in a nursing home now, and there is a huge difference between a retirement home and a nursing home. A retirement home means you can take care of yourself for the most part. Nursing homes mean nurses are on call twenty four seven. It means scheduled meals and baths and assistance in every task. Nursing homes are where people really go when they are going to die.

The smell is the same, though.

Rose shares a room with a boisterous woman who could talk over a jet engine. Poor Rose can barely get a word in edgewise.

The visits are almost the same as they were before. Rose sits still in her chair, all of us hoping she doesn't tip over, and we talk. We talk about life and passions and my future. We don't talk much about Rose anymore.

*I knew an old lady that swallowed a dog. What a hog, to swallow a dog.*

There is, apparently, a house of death. It's not the retirement home or the nursing home. It's called a hospice. They take out the word home entirely because, I would imagine, people live in homes. The people here are not living. They are dying. Really, really dying.

The people there mostly aren't even aware of what's happening, being on good drugs, but I wouldn't know. I don't go.

I cried and cried and didn't go. I didn't want to see her like that. I gave myself the excuse that most people do, that she wouldn't want me to remember her like that. It was a lie, most people just don't want to be alone, but it's what I told myself.

*I knew an old lady who swallowed a goat. She just opened her throat and swallowed a goat.*

Rose is gone. There was a funeral but I didn't go. I just keep thinking that I should have been there and I don't deserve to say goodbye. It's over and done and I don't even have the guts to look her family in the face and tell them I was her friend, that I was there for her when I could be. It didn't feel true.

*I knew an old lady who swallowed a horse. She died, of course.*

*This story was written when I was visiting a friend of mine at a retirement home. I was processing my feelings about that, and the feelings I had around my grandfather's death, and I wrote this. I was looking out my friend's window and all the leaves had fallen and it felt like an omen. Rose was made when I amalgamated my feelings into one piece and realized it wasn't really about my friend or my grandfather, but about how I was dealing with grief.*

*Brianna Grant is 26 years old. She is not very good at grieving and likes to write in her spare time.*

*Cornelia Peckart*

## **Ivy with Tree, 2021**



In March of 2020 the people in my community were asked to stay home and our hair grew and people tended their gardens and took care of their home environments. The road less travelled began to change...

Ivy with Tree, 2021, Watercolour on Wood, 18" x 36", is part of a series of works that are a meditative response to a global pandemic. In this work an Ivy plant grows wildly and becomes entwined with the wildly growing hair of a human.

*Cornelia Peckart, is a Hamilton-based artist. She enjoys a good walk in the woods with her pup Daisy.*

## **Bootlegierka**

Stella's mother was a bootlegger. The first time I heard this piece of news was at dinner. Not that it meant much to my five year old self at the time. As an only child, my parents never saw the need to censor any talk about friends or relatives in my presence. I was a quiet kid. I'd often been told that I was like my father in that respect. It may have been that my parents simply didn't notice my presence.

Sitting silently, I learned this new information about Stella's mother. My own mother, wishing to give credit where she felt it was due, put some thought into labelling the aforementioned lady properly. In what she perceived to be the correct Polish female designation of the title, my mother called her bootlegierka.

It was a delicious word, one I'd never heard before. I rolled it around on my tongue. Between slurps of my mother's weekly offering of boiled brisket and barley soup with rye bread, I proceeded to repeat the word, over and over. Each repetition tasted better than the last. It was a word worthy of being, not only said, but chanted.

"Oh no, Jania," said my mother, finally cluing in to my presence. "You can never say that word to Stella or her mother. Promise me."

Stella, the bootlegierka's daughter was a year younger than I. She was my mother's goddaughter. Our mothers were life-long friends, immigrants from the same rural village in Poland. Stella and her mother lived a block over from us, just east of Sherman Avenue in the heart of the thriving Polish community.

A quick shortcut through 2 the alleyway behind our house and five minutes later, we were at their front steps. It was my favourite place to visit. Stella's mother, who I now thought of as the bootlegierka, was a petite lady, her dainty features surrounded by dark curly hair, a constant smile on her red lips.

Unlike my own mother, the bootlegierka allowed Stella and me to choose whichever of her dresses and jewelry appealed to us. We twirled and danced in colourful dresses that weighed us down. Thousands of beads from neckline to hem, tropical birds and flowers, all embroidered, glistened under the lights. The bootlegierka had dresses the likes of which I had never seen in my mother's closet. Chains and necklaces encircled our hair and necks. Our perfumed arms waving in the air were covered with bracelets and bangles that sent out a melodious clatter. It was magic.

After many visits, I noticed that whenever we were at Stella's house, there were men sitting around the dining room table, joking and laughing. My mother and I, Stella and her mother, always stayed in the kitchen. Every so often, the bootlegierka left us to walk into the dining room with a large bottle to refill the men's glasses. As their talk and laughter grew louder, my mother would motion for me to help Stella tidy up. We left quickly.

"Is Stella's daddy one of the men in the other room?" I asked one day. Stella never talked about her father, even when I told her about mine and how he played with me.

"No, they're just friends who get together. Stella's mother is divorced. Her daddy doesn't come to visit Stella." 3

Divorced was a new word to add to my vocabulary. I didn't like the sound of this word or the idea associated with it. Nobody else I knew had parents who were not together. It was unthinkable to me.

By the time I was ten years old I was permitted to go, on my own, to Stella's new house. It was just off Barton Street next to an alleyway, a longer walk but still in the neighbourhood. My mother trusted that I would be fine. There were rules at this new place. On my first visit, the bootlegierka sat me down. Her face lacked the lovely smile I'd grown to associate with her. Her forehead wrinkled, she looked directly into my eyes. "If a policeman comes to the door, you must go out the back door and run home."

I couldn't imagine why a policeman would have any reason to visit Stella's house. They never came to our house. I promised to remember and follow the rules. During one visit, Stella and I were in the middle of a game. Loud banging on the door made us both jump, upsetting the game board, the pieces scattered over the floor. The pounding wouldn't stop. It continued to get louder. I could hear a man yelling outside. The bootlegierka stood with one hand on the doorknob. Fear contorting her face, erased every vestige of the beauty I'd come to admire.

I didn't stay long enough to find out who was at the door or if it was ever opened. I shot out the back door, down the alleyway beside the house and ran home, as instructed. The incident became my secret, never to be shared, not even with my mother. The joy of going to see Stella was forever gone, replaced by a fear I had no way of understanding.

A lifetime has passed and with that passage of time, I have come to realize that there is a sad truth in having to do whatever is necessary to survive. Each of us manages in our own unique way, as did bootlegierka.

*While written in the present, this piece is inspired by the past. The recent renaissance of the Barton and Sherman neighbourhood has provided me with an opportunity to reminisce on my childhood experiences. I have been drawn to reflect on the memories of a special time and place in my slice of Hamilton, when it was at its best, and the many wonderful characters who impacted my young life.*

*Jennette Lukasik, is a life-long Hamiltonian, retired teacher and alumna of McMaster University. I have been honoured to receive awards for my writing submissions to the Gillett Reminiscence Memoir category of the Short Works Prize. My writing draws on life experiences. I also enjoy writing fiction in the mystery genre.*

*Jeff Griffiths*

## **I Saw This in a Movie**

My Dad told me about this time he was in the back room at the Edgewater Hotel waiting to get into a poker game and he said out loud that a guy was cheating. That guy said he wasn't and pushed a gun against my father's stomach.

My Dad said what he always said when referring to fear, "I almost shit my pants." He also said, "That was the day I learned to keep my eyes open and my mouth shut."

I was thirteen, just when childhood was wrapping up and teenage years were about to tear me apart. My sisters were younger and still acted out family problems with their Barbies. I wanted to play with my Hot Wheels but knew I had to stop.

It was a week later that my Dad came home with a shotgun. The gun was in a special bag with a zipper. He claimed that there had been a bunch of teenagers drinking in the field behind our house on the weekends and he wanted us to be safe. My mother stood back with her arms folded.

I went outside and grabbed my bike and rode around the neighbourhood until it got dark.

Around nine that same night my Dad put the shotgun in the vice on his messy workbench and hack-sawed the barrel off. I went downstairs and he was sweating. He smirked and said, "I saw this in a movie."

I felt older, and he was the kid that was excited about a bad decision.

He talked fast about keeping the family safe from the scum that crawled out from under their rocks every night.

I went upstairs to the kitchen and my mom was washing dishes. When I spoke she jumped and put her soapy hand over her heart. "You scared the Jesus out of me."

"Sorry." I opened the fridge.

"What is your father doing in the basement?"

"Cutting the end off that stupid gun."

"He's what?"

"Making a sawed off shotgun." I tried to sound like a cop on TV.

She ran downstairs.

I went to my bedroom and listened through the heat duct. My parents argued. My mother's opinions made sense and my father sounded crazier each time he spoke.

They lowered their voices and I put a record on my turntable.

The next day was Saturday. My parents always slept until at least 10 while the rest of the neighbours were cutting lawns and washing cars. I had begun to sleep later too. I used to get up at seven to watch cartoons but I was staying up later reading and listening to music. I lay on the bed looking out the window. I could see the top of the tree fort I hadn't used in a year.

All I seemed to think about were my records and Kathy who lived four doors up the street. At least my records didn't ignore me.

I got up, pulled on jeans and a T shirt and went to the washroom. The TV was on. My sisters were watching Scooby-do. I passed by them on my way to the kitchen, they moved their heads to see around me but didn't say anything.

I slumped onto the couch with my Puffed Wheat cereal and watched the cartoon. Dad walked past clearing his throat and scratching his stomach. His eyes were squinty and his hair was sticking up.

My sister asked Dad when Mom was getting up.

He said, "Let your mother sleep."

I heard him plug the kettle in and spoon instant coffee into a mug.

Mom got up at 10:30 and my sisters jumped up and followed her to the kitchen. She made bacon and eggs. My Dad drank his coffee outside on the front steps.

I rode my bike to the mall with my friend Steve after breakfast. We spent most of the afternoon in the food court eating salt and vinegar chips and watching girls. Steve asked me to have supper at his house and sleep over so we stopped at my place to get my stuff.

The station wagon was gone and Mom was sitting on a lawn chair smoking.

"Where's Dad?"

“I don’t know. I can’t keep tabs on him every second of the day.” She had a bottle of beer in her hand.

“Can I stay for dinner and sleep over at Steve’s?”

She shrugged. “Don’t forget your tooth brush.”

Steve and I set up his tent in his backyard and his mom made popcorn. His Dad tried scaring us with the flashlight under his chin.

I’d been asleep for a while when Steve’s Dad opened the tent. He was wearing a plaid housecoat. “I have to take you home. Your mom called.”

My stomach flipped. “What happened?”

“Your mom said everyone is fine she just needs you home.”

It was only two blocks so Steve’s dad let me go on my own as long as I walked my bike. When I turned onto my street there was a police car in front of our house.

My father was sitting in the kitchen and Mom was talking to the policeman.

“I’ll be just a minute,” Mom said.

The policeman smiled. “Everything is fine,” he said to Mom.

I went in and Dad shook his head. “The god damn gun went off and blew a hole in the floor of the back porch. Nearly shot my foot off.”

I didn’t even try to come up with a reply. I went to my room. About fifteen minutes later Mom peeked in. “I guess I could have left you at Steve’s. Things got a little hectic around here.”

“It’s Ok,” I said.

The next morning I woke up at nine. My sisters were playing with their Barbies in the living room.

I sat on the couch with a bowl of puffed wheat and watched them.

Barbie stood in front of Ken and said, “Please. Oh please don’t shoot me.”

*Jeff Griffiths lives in Hamilton. His short fiction has been published in numerous literary journals including Time and Place. He won the Arts Hamilton short fiction award a couple of times and was short listed for Fiddlehead’s 2017 short fiction prize. He placed first in Subterrain’s 2018 short fiction contest and Gritlit’s 2019 contest.*

## **Carlton and Sherbourne, 1997**

everything feels cinematic here  
gritty urban noir  
junkies in the park and in the vestibule of my building  
condoms on the sidewalks  
boarded up tenements  
sirens and streetcars and shouting  
a place my friends back home called scary and dangerous  
but which seemed alive and vibrant to me  
at least back then

the francophone sex workers are the nicest people you'll  
ever meet  
living in the apartment building right next door to their  
church  
everybody's aunties  
they know us all  
old and young  
alone or not  
fortunate or unfortunate  
the godmothers of a haphazard family of people who  
understand  
something we're reminded of regularly  
that we've only got each other  
nobody else is going to look out for us

not the investigators from the burbs  
juggernauts in expensive suits and silk ties  
driving fancy new unmarked SUVs  
who don't give a damn about the old guy taken up to the  
Wellesley  
burns all over his body from the fire in the building next  
door

or the rest of us standing out on the street waiting for the  
all-clear  
while they sneer and laugh derisively and say  
right in front of everyone  
“what do you expect? these people live like rats”

not the media  
the journalists who don't talk to any of us  
the photographers and videographers who ignore us all  
training their cameras on the kittens rescued from the  
apartment  
firefighters holding oxygen masks over tiny mewling faces  
more palatable content than ragtag humanity

not the building managers  
who don't seem to care when another old guy  
in the apartment right next door to mine  
hasn't been seen in over a week  
we all keep asking them to check on him  
but they don't  
not until the smell of death starts to fill the hallway  
overwhelming even before the door is finally unlocked by  
the super  
the barely navigable apartment filled with the collections of  
a lifetime  
a knee-deep path of neatly stacked newspapers from one  
room to another  
ending in the pile he's under  
the uncertainty of which happened first  
death or burial

he always wore a well-kept black suit  
and a sharp trilby which he doffed to the ladies of the  
evening  
but he never spoke to anyone  
never answered his door because his hearing had gone

and he died alone  
the working girls cry for him  
and for the burned neighbour who they tried to visit at the  
hospital  
but they weren't family  
and he had none  
they go next door and pray for these lonely gents  
asking nothing for themselves

it's les filles who watch over everyone  
I see them every day  
either coming or going  
"how are you, cherie? found a job? I lit a candle for you!"  
and  
"we're having a sale in the churchyard to raise money for the  
funeral  
buy my tall boots, they'll fit your feet — merde, such short  
legs!"  
and  
"you staying safe with that pretty boy? is he good to you?  
no way he's straight, totalement, mais bon amusement,  
hein?"

those of us who were new in town learned from them  
how to stay alert  
to keep the peace on ragged streets  
to do our best to walk and talk as neither threat nor prey  
any hour of the night or day  
to carry a lighter and change so as to offer small kindnesses  
and pepper spray and pocket sirens and a quarter for a pay  
phone  
just in case  
and that some fine examples of love, humanity, and decency  
can come from those who've seen the other side  
up close and personal  
carrying more grace than those who don't care

who turn away and focus on more palatable subjects  
or the do-gooders who do far too much harm  
just a trio of women who give a damn  
defiant and protective goddesses bearing aegis  
where the side you see depends on what you expect them to  
be  
some saw gorgons who turned men to stone  
selling the only wares they could rely on  
all I ever saw was their goodness  
self-defense becoming a shield borne by warriors

they know these streets like wolves know territory  
content in it after all these years  
despite the way it changes

Allan Gardens  
the streetcars and corner stores  
Cabbagetown on its way to gentrification  
St. James Town's ever-shifting demographics  
the gaybourhood that's lost too many other good souls  
and the church  
the priest chatting with them at the yard sale  
bringing them each a smile and a coffee  
cradled like a votive offering  
know your audience

that was long ago  
I haven't been there in years  
and couldn't afford to live there if I wanted to  
a six-hundred dollar apartment  
complete with roaches  
now costs three times that  
and might have bedbugs  
but hey  
it's been renovated!  
and better than the building across the overgrown courtyard  
where the fire happened

boarded up and dilapidated now  
though it'll become condos eventually  
just like everything else does

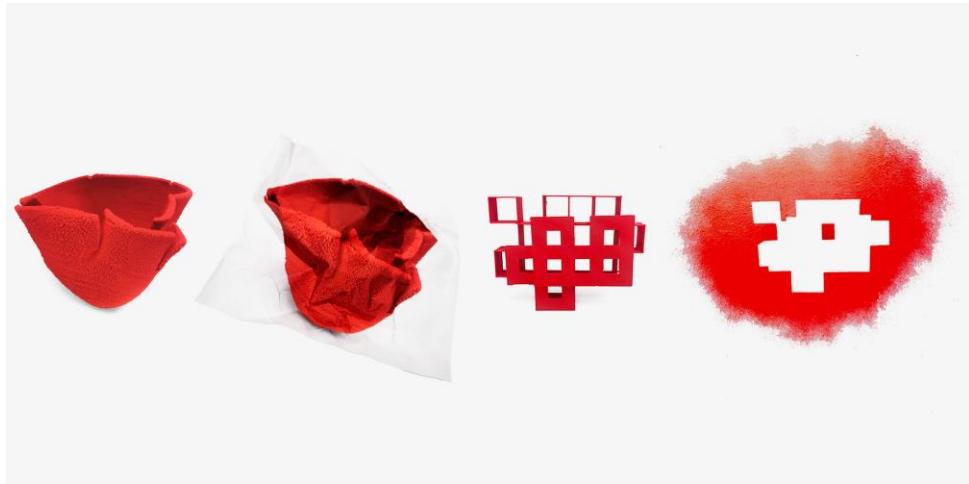
I wonder about the girls sometimes  
our noble sisters of street-level mercy  
proud and dignified and resourceful  
those better angel mendicants  
doing the lord's work without a permit  
for the sake of collective survival  
wading through wreckage  
knee-deep and combustible  
knowing that in the end  
it's humans that make hell on earth  
sometimes in the name of religion  
or policy  
but it's humans who can make heaven too  
as long as our friends look out for us

mes belles anges  
I hope you're alive and well  
and I send you love and light  
every time I cup my hand around a flame  
dip into my pocket for change  
or can't turn away  
I remember you sitting on the concrete steps under the  
awning  
smiling at every lost soul like they're old friends  
bearing witness and keeping vigil  
your suede jackets with fringed wings  
haloes of menthol smoke around your heads  
three great daughters of wisdom watching the world go by  
foi  
espérance  
et charité

*After university I moved from small-town Ontario to the big city to look for work, chase dreams, shake demons, build a new life, throw my hat in the air, all that jazz. That first year, 1997, I lived in what was arguably the worst part of town, and though some aspects of it were genuinely terrible, I had a great time. When people say they could never live downtown (pick a city, any city, someone always says this), they're right; you have to believe that you belong there before you can belong there. And if you belong, all kinds of magic opens up for you.*

*Having reached the age of not giving a damn, when there's less point in worrying about making money from art or whether something is good enough, A. S. Black's work is finally, slowly moving into the world again.*

## Process as Vacuum



Clay is hysterical. It remembers when you want it to forget and forgets when you remember what it was you had forgotten. Its allure is sensual: it is a highly tactile conversationalist. It too borrows from water, air, and temperature and results in a partnership that can be agreeable. It's a difficult path being potter/ceramist/mud slinger: I prefer the term burnt dirt manipulator; whimsically attached yet grounded in a historical framework.

I have learned that we each hold our idea of what functionality is and to what purpose it retains as key to universality. For me, the literal sense of functionality with bowls, teapots, plates, and cups and saucers becomes something greater. As objects they, in a sense, hold memory and nuances of place.

My practice starts with hands on the potter's wheel to extruding forms, and to working with rapid prototyping technologies. Clay propels the peripheral stories of our experiences and connects us to dialogue for millennia.

To employ these processes and to research and reflect on not only independent sources of commodity but as independently working components to greater purpose, is phenomenal. With full understanding of these proponents in crafting potential, I integrate my thoughts on the relevance of maker as cultural and historical commentator.

*Christopher Reid Flock moved to Ibaraki, Japan where he lived and studied ceramics for nine years. He returned to Hamilton, Ontario in 2009. He is the recipient of the 2014 Winifred Shantz Award for Ceramics, the 2015 Founders Award at the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, and through the support of the Canada Council for the Arts fine craft grant programs, he continues to push the envelope with clay.*

*His work can be found in private collections across Canada, China, France, Japan, the USA, and in the permanent collections of Taipei County Yingge Ceramics Museum, The Clayand Glass Gallery, and the Art Gallery of Burlington. He is in his second year at the University of Manitoba where he expects to complete his MFA, Ceramics in 2022.*

## One, Two, Three

“Stop fidgeting with that and put the safety on before you kill one of us.”

He looks at the gun, then back up at Him.

“Ye know I get thae nervous energy afore a job.”

“What *is* your job on this job anyway? “

He looks down then back to Him.

“Look Youse hae yer orders, I hauf mine ... together thaes the job. Same as always, so leave it be.”

He looks away again.

“Mebbe when this is done I’ll have me a fish supper ... ya, I could murder a fish supper or mebbe a wee Indian.”

“Oh for ... always about the food ... all these years watching you eat. How is it your still alive?”

He smiles broadly at Him.

“Ach, no diet like a Caledonian’s fae livin’ large!”

He turns and stares into the shadows.

“There She is ... away wi ye nou an dae whae ye’ve been sent tae dae.”

He watches Him go. He watches Him return.

“How d’d She take it?”  
He looks at Him, reading for signs.

“Well, she didn’t shoot the messenger.”

He looks Him in the eyes.

“Aye, about that...”

He raises the gun, fires point blank. The aim shows Him no mercy.

She approaches.

“Dinae shoot the messenger ... now tha’s funny. Right, tha’s that Hen. Fancy a fish supper wi me?”

“Perhaps, yes.”

He turns to lead the way. She removes a small piece from her cloak and fires. He drops beside Him.

“I think I would rather Italian though.”

*This was written as an exercise to write a dialogue-heavy scene with secrets. The characters started talking in my head right away and wouldn’t shut up until I let them out. They still natter on from time-to-time.*

*Ed Shaw likes to write but doesn’t do as often as he should. He has published two volumes of poetry and is very slowly working on a compilation of stories about his time behind the bar of an English pub.*





*Contributors:*

*Dominic Leah Conda*

*Sally Cooper*

*Virginia Ashbury*

*Scot Cameron*

*Brianna Grant*

*Cornelia Peckart*

*Jennette Lukasik*

*Jeff Griffiths*

*Ani Black*

*Christopher Reid Flock*

*Ed Shaw*

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