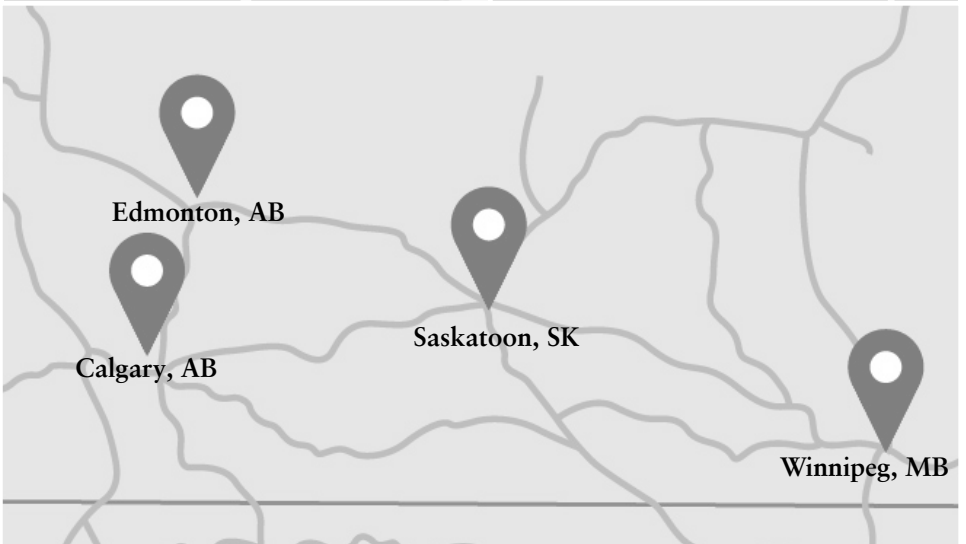


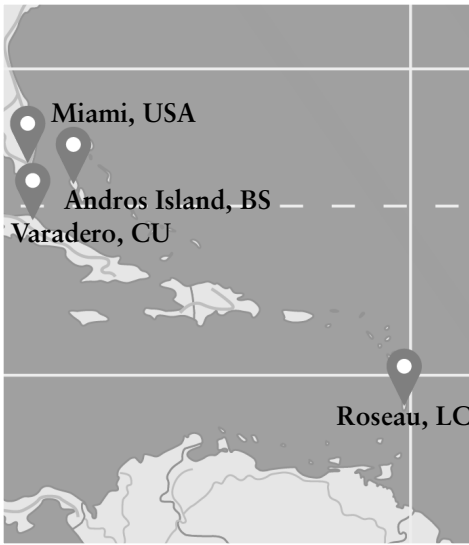
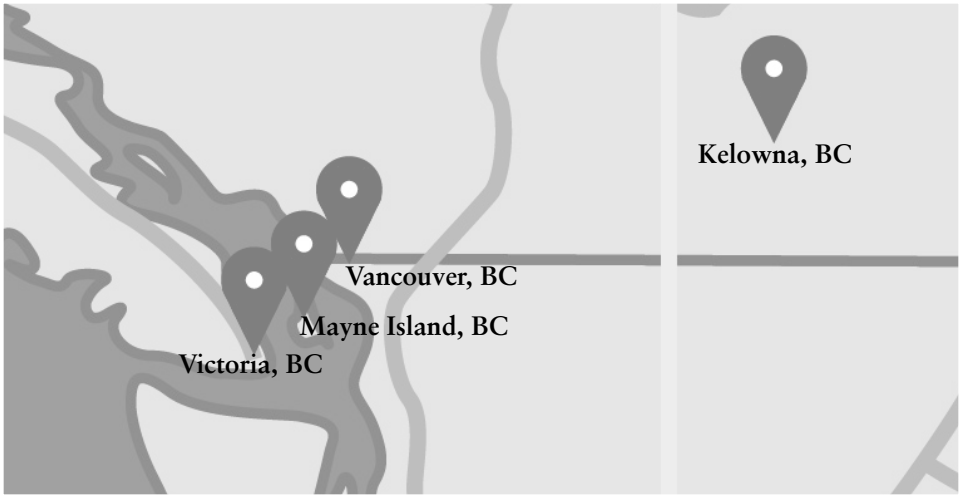


LOCATIONS OF GRIEF

an emotional geography

24 PERSONAL ESSAYS
EDITED BY CATHERINE OWEN







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WOLSAK
& WYNN

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*American literature is about grief
spread over space.*

– Richard Harrison

Grief is wild; it's a feral energy.

– Francis Weller

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PREFACE, OR
A PLACE FROM WHICH TO BEGIN

Catherine Owen

I started thinking about the relationship between landscape and grieving even before he died. As with much knowledge, it came to me through poetry. The sonnet “Time Does Not Bring Relief” by Edna St. Vincent Millay ends with the lines:

And entering with relief some quiet place
Where never fell his foot or shone his face
I say, “There is no memory of him here!”
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

In the weeks and then months following Chris’s death, I would recite these lines many times to myself, comprehending ever more deeply the bond between loss and place, mourning and intimate spaces, land and memory. And how the ghost of the loved person in your mind begins to reshape realms they never even inhabited so that, for a period of years, everywhere one goes is altered, changed, re-topographed in a sense by their phantom status.

I also began to pay attention to how often place is referenced in grief texts – those “eulogized spaces” as Gaston Bachelard calls them, a library I started to accumulate, featuring titles from C.S. Lewis to Joan Didion, Roland Barthes to Neil Peart. Lewis, in *A Grief Observed*, recounts how, initially, it is hard to revisit places marked by a lost beloved but that, eventually, absence is “like the sky, spread over everything.” Peart, in *Ghost Rider*, embraces travel as a mode through which to detach himself from the constant reminders of his deceased wife and daughter in places as disparate as their cabin in Lac St. Brutus, Quebec, and the corner of Bay and Bloor in Toronto, while Barthes grows to loathe travel after his mother’s death because it takes him away from the familiar “locality of the room” where she took her final breaths. Didion, in her memoir *A Year of Magical Thinking*, describes grief itself as a tangible yet mysterious place “none of us know until we reach it,” a sentiment Don Coles echoes in one of his poems where one literally “come[s] to grief,” rounding a “corner and there it is, you have / come to it.” In more theoretical fashion, Priscila Uppal in *We Are What We Mourn* depicts landscape in elegy as an “active site for reconnection with the dead,” and a tome on the prevalence of the roadside shrine in BC called *Public Grief, Private Mourning* focuses on how, as we have become gradually dislocated from rural and stable communities, we seek to transform a variety of landscapes into places for remembering, including such virtual locales as Facebook pages. Grief is everywhere in the land, the very soil steeped in it, the air around it imbued with loss. This reality should be taken as both marking the difficulty inherent in mourning, its

inescapability, but also as normalizing the process of grieving: it does not occur in tidy stages or certain places; it is wherever we are and, in some sense, always.

Locations of Grief: An Emotional Geography draws together twenty-four Canadian writers of a range of ages, ethnicities and gender identities. One is primarily a well-known painter. One writes about the death of her dog; another about the strangely moving suicide of a stranger. Most, however, speak about the deaths of intimately known individuals from causes as diverse as cancer and drowning to car accidents and overdoses. Some write about local landscapes, such as their back garden in Ontario; others recall locations where loss occurred, some as far-flung as Saint Lucia, New York and the Bahamas.

The anthology attends to what Bachelard called a “topoanalysis,” or a study, in memoir form, of the intimate sites of our lives. Divided into five sections, each features a unifying location, a particular geographical locus forever altered by the experience of death. Although some pieces fall into several categories, my aim was to focus on the memoir’s overarching landscape: the primary room, country or natural feature eternally impacted by loss so that the writer wishes to vacate the area or more deeply attach themselves to the realm, or perhaps wherever they flee a haunted sense of the region, topography or element pursues them.

Part one is “The Garden.” Alice Major commemorates her dog’s favourite space, the yard, and in the process examines the humanized nature of elegy; David Haskins buries his wife’s ashes in this most familiar place; Lynn Tait plants a

tree for her son; and Jenna Butler commemorates her lost daughters on her farm. In part two, “The Neighbourhood,” six writers depict how their wider environs shift in meaning once they directly suffer a death. Steven Heighton’s loss may have been of a stranger, but being witness to the aftermath of a neighbour’s suicide nonetheless produced a grief of incomprehension that turned him, for a time, into a geographical detective, obsessed with the landscape features that signified, or prefigured, this man’s tragedy. Alice Burdick, Onjana Yawngshwe and Marilyn Dumont detail the varying ways an urban neighbourhood transmogrifies following a death, and Katherine Bitney and Sharon Thesen attend to more rural/suburban permutations of grief.

The third section, “Elemental Spaces,” though the featured landscapes may be urban or rural, in proximity to home or at a distance, pay homage to the matter of the ecosystem: water, as with Waubgeshig Rice, Canisia Lubrin, Christine Lowther and Nikki Reimer, in scenes of, respectively, recollection, tragedy, detachment and burial; and rock, commemorated in Catherine Graham’s quarry, as a place of thwarted healing and solace.

Part four then features the unfortunate but also often necessary “Clinical Zones,” both hospitals and funeral/cremation homes. Richard Harrison’s mother chooses to die in a hospice by lethal injection; Catherine Greenwood’s father takes his final breaths in an Alzheimer’s ward in a state of disorientation. And I myself must cope with the cold regulations of the coroner’s office and Simply Cremations, where rules establish walls between the survivor and the deceased, their procedures inevitably leaking into the

surrounding landscapes, increasing my own detachment from the loci of loss.

The final section, “Foreign Realms,” features writers dealing with deaths far from home or while they are away, from Jane Eaton Hamilton’s Bahamas to James Picard’s New York and Lisa Richter’s sojourns in the Caribbean and Montreal. Daniel Zomparelli experiences his sister’s and later his mother’s deaths as a source of disorientation between locales that serves to increase his fear of travel, though eventually encourages him to relocate to Los Angeles, while the death of her father leads Theresa Kishkan to re-examine her family’s history in the Czech Republic. In closing, the unexpected loss of Ben Gallagher’s girlfriend sends him back to Scotch Village, Nova Scotia, from Hamilton, Ontario, in an attempt to preserve his loved mate’s legacy and to honour her final wishes.

Locations of Grief: An Emotional Geography is an act of what the Welsh call “hiraeth” or, in essence, a commemoration of the “homesick grief for the lost places of your past.” This kind of grief particularly relates to how death creates or deepens a sense of homesickness, establishing a new relationship with the world as something transient, shifting, scarred. Or even, sometimes, making it more beloved, the locus of memory becoming, in its present, an ineffable realm of longing.

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**ONE:
THE GARDEN**

WE HAVE ELEGIES TO WRITE

Alice Major

I am mourning the dog.

Just a little dog, one of the thousands that bark and scamper in our urban off-leash parks, a blur of brown and tan, caramel and black. Almost indistinguishable – you are sometimes reduced to looking for a familiar pink harness or plaid coat to tell whether that’s Georgia or Gus, Maggie, Princess or Whiffle.

But you always know your own little dog from all the others. Whiffle’s soft poodle-droopy ears, the squared-off shape from the terrier side of her mixed breed, her gait with its distinctive hop, the frill of white edging her forepaws. Although my brain’s recognition systems are specialized for human faces, I’d never mistake her for any other dog. Nor would she have mistaken me for any other two-legged, parka-clad creature strolling on the path.

This would have been exactly the right day for the park – cool and gold. Instead, I’m indoors without her, looking at the tangle of bushes and branches beyond my window. Three weeks ago, it was an indistinguishable blur of green.

Now autumn is starting to make its distinctions: the butter-yellow of ash leaves, the pinkish-tan of flowering almond. My thoughts this afternoon are as entangled as the branches: What makes us distinct, completely identifiable as “us”? What about that old idea of a “soul” that marks us apart from everyone else? Do animals have souls?

On that last question, religion is dubious. “Soul” is a status that is, in Christian traditions anyway, particularly human. Science is dubious about the concept altogether – at least about the kind of immaterial, immortal soul that isn’t connected to physical meat and neurons. Still, in different ways, religion and science can agree there’s something that makes both the dog and I each unique and irreplaceable.

Meanwhile, I am missing that little dog who chased squirrels in the garden beyond this window until just a few days ago. As I stare through the glass, a faint breeze stirs a single leaf on the tip of a branch. Its serrated edges stand out clearly in this afternoon light that is calm, attentive, elegiac.

Elegy. It is one of the essential wellsprings of poetry, swelling out of our deep need to pay attention to the loss of someone loved, to give meaning to their life.

The word itself comes from a particular form used in ancient Greek literature, using a particular pattern of stresses. This strict pattern could be used for any number of subjects – war and love were as appropriate as mourning. Over the centuries, poetry in English came to flip these requirements. Instead of referring to a specific form used for a variety of subjects, “elegy” became a poem that could take any form the poet cared to use, but which focused on very specific content.

Someone is dead, and we need to come to terms with it.

*

But really now – writing an elegy for the dog? I feel frustrated with myself, snivelling here at the window. I'm in the rut of old guilt about having my heart clamped so firmly around one small animal when the world needs so much care and attention. "What are you doing for the refugees, Alice?" I ask myself sternly, knowing that the answer is "Damn all."

Then I bow my head and acknowledge that this is how love works. We're like Lego blocks, designed to fit together with immediate neighbours, and through that process, connecting with more distant blocks in order to build houses and towers. I can/should do things for refugees, but there is no way that I can mourn their individual suffering as I can constantly miss the presence of my immediate companions.

And, after all, isn't it anthropocentric to say that animals aren't worth loving in the same way that we love people? Their lives are as whole and complete; they are not "lesser beings" to themselves. Would I really be a better person if I didn't care as much? In fact, I'd probably be less human. I know that what I feel for Whiffle comes out the evolutionary kit bag that disposes us to care greatly for small children, that swell of adult-to-infant love. It's a capacity that all mammals have. However, humans succeeded in large measure because we were especially good at embracing that emotion and extending it – not just our own children but others; not just members of our own tribe but others; and ultimately, not just our own species but others.

I do worry, though, that love for an animal is like one of those finishing-off blocks supplied in Lego kits, the half-length ones that tidy up the end of a row. The love of a child goes on to connect with others in the world, but the pet will

not go off to click into other networks in your absence. The love of an animal does come back to us, but it *is* a bit self-indulgent; it doesn't spur me on the way that caring for a child or grandchild would connect me with a larger world, a future time.

That need for connection to the larger world lies at the heart of elegy. An elegy doesn't necessarily tell you the colour of the loved one's eyes, the small details of their dress – these are the content of personal lyric. Nor is elegy the same as dirge or threnody, the words that pour from new grief. Elegies are less intense yet larger in other ways. They are attempts to find meaning, to place the departed life in context. In classic elegies, the natural world joins in the mourning, often in opposition to the cruelty or indifference of human society.

One of the big, emblematic elegies in English literature is Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," about the death of Abraham Lincoln. Even though the president's name is never mentioned in the poem, he is present as a brilliant evening star setting in the west. There is the coffin that journeys by day and night, the hermit thrush whose notes sink in warning then burst again in joy, the lilacs that have returned with their fragrance. We wouldn't learn very much from the poem about its political context or the shape of Lincoln's face. We do learn what that brilliant star meant emotionally to the author. We do see Whitman's struggle to find meaning in great national loss.

Little dogs don't matter much to the political dramas of a bigger world. For me, however, Whiffle was more than a child substitute or an emotional bottle stopper, and she did connect me to others; through her death, I'm also mourning my parents.

The dog arrived in our house the same spring that my parents came to live with us, no longer able to cope on their own with my mother's health concerns and my father's cognitive decline. My husband had always wanted a dog. I thought, "Well, if I'm quartering two octogenarians on him, maybe I should throw in a puppy."

They were all good for each other. Neighbours called her "the most-walked dog on the street." Dad played tag with her and helped teach her to shake a paw. I could go to meetings and know they kept each other company.

Looking out this window to the tremble of a leaf, I suddenly hear my mother's soft, Scottish-tinted voice. It came from a time near the end of her life, after my father finally had to go into a dementia ward. She said, "Sometimes, when you are out, I talk to Whiffle. I tell her all my troubles."

Today, this memory stops my heart. She said it as if it were part confession, part something to laugh at, to be a little embarrassed about. And yet it was something very important, a kind of plea, a way of saying how lonely she was.

I suppose I returned some light answer at the time. But now, I am picturing Mum on the blue-green couch, Whiffle sitting beside her, head cocked at the voice speaking to her, the same gentle voice that read storybooks to me when I was a little girl. What exactly would the words have been? The voice that uttered them and the bright eyes that watched her face as she spoke, the perked ears, the consciousness – all of this is gone.

Oh, Whiffle, how you would have jumped and wagged your tail, even years after she left us, if Auntie Mary had walked through the door. The picture makes me smile. I imagine such a reunion and the two of you sitting on the blue sofa, waiting for me. It's a crumb of comfort.

But, no matter how many Rainbow Bridge emoticons friends post on Facebook, I can't take that heavenly resurrection seriously. It simply doesn't make sense to me – that picture comes from my past, not from the future.

Humans have been trying to come to terms with the idea of a soul or spirit and an afterlife for as long as we've been conscious of death. The conceptual world of hunter-gatherers was inhabited by spirits that took on the shape of animals and humans as well as non-living things. Animals' spirits persisted after death and had to be placated and respected when the creature was killed. Ancient civilizations went on to imagine many variations of an existence after death. For the classical Greeks, it was an afterlife in a pale underworld where most souls clustered, shadows of their physical selves, while a fortunate few were made incarnate and immortal by the gods.

Meanwhile, ancient philosophers were debating various ideas of selfhood, coming up with variations on two basic concepts. One was dualism: that a spirit can exist separate from the body and survive without it. The other is that the soul is a life principle, an energizer and animator of the physical, but not separable from it – the stance known as “materialism” or “physicalism.” Christianity inherited these contrasting strands from Greek and Hebraic thought, and added its own particular twist: insistence on a physical resurrection of an actual body after death – an afterlife that began with Jesus himself and was then extended to all believers.

Over the centuries, the details of resurrection have been subject to intense theological debate. When does it take place? At the end times? What happens to our souls in the

meantime? Are they left in some cryogenic sleep, or do they exist in some sort of conscious afterlife? And the inevitable practical considerations – how would exact physical reassembly work? Theologians tied themselves in knots over the assembly instructions, even getting to the point where they concluded that animals would have to disgorge body parts they had devoured. Which led to the thought that the animals themselves would have to be resurrected, too.

Resurrection of the body – the idea that we will be revived after death as uniquely ourselves, with all our memories and emotions intact – is an essential dogma for denominations such as the Catholic Church. Most adherents don't worry too much about the details. God will sort it all out. For now, we tell children, and ourselves, that it will be all right. We will see Nanna or Princess again in Heaven. They are waiting for us there.

But *does* my little dog have a soul? Most early Christian thinkers wouldn't have thought so. In the fourth century, Saint Augustine pointed out that Christ himself sent a whole herd of swine into the sea as a clear message that “to refrain from the killing of animals and of plants is the height of superstition.”

A thousand years later, the great theologian Thomas Aquinas held a more nuanced view. Aquinas had been reading the work of Aristotle (who had recently been reintroduced into Western thought via Arab scholars), and he elaborated on the Greek philosopher's concept of three-layered souls. Humans had a vegetative soul, shared with plants, that enabled growth and reproduction; a sensitive soul, capable of perception and movement, that we shared with animals; and

finally, a rational soul, capable of reason and ethics, that is peculiar to humans.

However, medieval theologians had to work hard to preserve the idea that animals were not rational. When they observed complex behaviour in non-human creatures, they kept adding other senses – such as *estimativa*, the judgment needed to avoid danger – to the sensitive side of the soul ledger, in order to keep the line between humans and animals firmly drawn.

Today, science keeps making that theological line ever more blurry with animal studies that demonstrate human-like cognitive processing. A recent one, for instance, used MRI techniques to show that dogs process words using brain systems in a similar way to humans. If I mentioned Whiffle's name in passing, her ears might twitch – the left hemisphere of her brain had distinguished the word. If I shouted other words in enthusiasm or anger, she would have bounced to her feet, because she was processing the emotion in my voice with her right hemisphere. But if I said "Whiffle!" in that bright, we're-going-for-a-walk tone, she would be up and dancing on her hind legs at the door as sound and emotion came together into meaning for her.

Science has also been smudging another age-old line, the dualist one that separates body and soul into two separate kinds of matter. As neuroscientists peer into our brains, they find that many of the functions traditionally assigned to spirit – like will, reason, judgment, self-control – arise from the action of physical circuits in a brain. The space for a separate soul keeps shrinking.

All this neuroscience creates problems for the idea of immortality. What, if anything, can continue without your

physical infrastructure and still be uniquely, identifiably you? And in turn, this creates a problem for the idea of resurrection. If there isn't something separate and divine that distinguishes us, then you *really* need the exact reassembly of the physical body in order to bring about continuity of the unique individual.

However, modern physics also kicks in here and makes the possibility of reassembling the physical even more difficult than the old theologians had imagined. All the atoms in our bodies are continually being swapped out. It's not just the sloughing of skin cells or the continual rebuilding of bone. Even our long-lived neurons are not composed of the same atoms they were seven years ago.

I sometimes amuse myself by wondering: What if you could capture all the atoms that have been part of me in a holding tank and then reconfigure them into exactly the same pattern? What would be the real me? This is not a thought experiment that could ever be carried out, not merely because of technical difficulties but for deep theoretical reasons. In fact, you cannot, ever, tag an electron or proton with an identity. This is one essential aspect of quantum theory that hasn't entered popular culture. We really don't *get* how utterly indistinguishable the bits of matter are that make up our world, our physical bodies.

Electrons are not like Lego blocks. You could put a dab of nail polish on a block and keep track of it as it becomes part of a model cabin or is disassembled into a scatter on the floor. An electron, however, has a complete lack of individuality that includes, in Peter Pesic's words, "the complete equality of all observable features. It has no inherent reference to space or time."

This is what our unique selves are made of: bits that are completely and utterly indistinguishable. Which means we'd be endlessly reproducible – Alice and Whiffle over and over again, assembled from molecules of carbon and passing electrons, arranged into identical patterns. A complicated technological challenge, no doubt, but not one that, in principle, requires a unique, divine spark.

Of course, the even bigger technical challenge would be the need to keep those instantaneous assemblages tracking along together through time. It's not enough to have two identical Alices at this moment. For most of us, time is essential to soul. We require continuity from past into future. We want to remember our lives after death, want to go on being the unique individuals that we are before it. We want the dog to recognize us on the far side of the Rainbow Bridge. We feel our soul isn't simply a pattern, a snapshot of our identity, but a rope woven through time. Shorter strands may have been used to spin it, none of which lasts forever, but it is the same rope from end to end.

In other words, we think of the soul as what a physicist might call a "path-dependent system." For such systems, the math gets complicated. If you are working with a path-independent system, like a flask full of nitrous oxide, you can simplify the counting: there are so many molecules in state X and so many in state Y. In such a situation, you can usefully use averages to describe the system accurately, without worrying whether any given piece is in any particular state at any given time. But if you have to track every single component individually through time, the calculations and memory requirements rapidly become gigantic, even infinite.

This is what we ask of a divine being that can watch every sparrow's fall, which means watching every molecule of every sparrow for its complete life. And we want that watching to be conscious. "*There goes Alice with Whiffle toward the park.*"

Which brings me back to elegy. It is part of the memory system that encodes our consciousness of love, retains snapshots of the Lego castles that are now dismantled and scattered. The tradition has continued to evolve – elegies are not written only for the great and the good, but for the small and local. Even for a dog.

In his "Elegy for a Dead Labrador," Lars Gustafsson writes that he and his pet were:

Two

of those places where the universe makes a knot
in itself, short-lived complex structures

.....

... You were a question
asked of another question, nothing more,
and neither had the answer to the other.

"Will you get another dog?" friends ask me. Sometimes I think, yes, I will. There are aspects of dogs that are indistinguishable and interchangeable – wagging tails, bright eyes, an enthusiasm for your company, a physical weight at your side or lying on your feet. Sometimes I want to rush out and replace that presence right now. At the same time, I know

that no puppy could be a Lego block to fit into this exact space in my heart.

Yesterday afternoon, I had the impulse to pull out a journal from the time when my parents first arrived here. The entries were a tale of frantic coping. How did I pull it off? Trying to write in the interstices of cooking and cleaning, of dealing with my father's increasingly irrational behaviour and equally irrational professional dramas, of finishing freelance projects and house-training.

Clearly, from the journal's pages, I was fond of the little animal in those early days. She was becoming a companion who curled up on my bed on rare evenings when I could retreat upstairs – a frazzled Rapunzel – while Mum and Dad watched television and my husband attended a meeting. But equally clearly, the dog wasn't as important to me as she would become.

I find this curiously comforting – that love doesn't have to have the happy ending at the beginning, that we don't know what will grow from small things or everything the future will bring. Death, of course, but not only death.

I have become more and more convinced that soul – identity – has something to do with energy and with time. It's more than a static pattern, an arrangement of atoms. It's like the kind of energy that preserves a soliton wave through water, interacting with itself and holding together rather than dispersing as most waves do. A soliton maintains its energy even as it leaves behind the water molecules that formed its shape as it passed through.

Some of us expect the soliton wave of our soul will, sooner or later, lose its material energy and dissipate onto a hiss of

sand. Others believe there's something about that pattern of energy that can continue through time and beyond it. But we all believe in the reality of a distinct identity, the uniqueness that makes us essentially ourselves and deserves respect and love. And in this respect, I am certain that animals have souls, too.

I am curiously haunted by the dog. I hear her jingle down the stairs. From the corner of my eye, I see her looking around the frame of the office door to find me. I look out this window and, in the movement of a branch, seem to see her lift her head suddenly to listen for that squirrel. I feel intensely that she is somehow the genius of this small place, that she is inseparable from these layered leaves and me.

The breeze has strengthened, the colours foam together, more leaves separate and fall, spinning. "She must be here," I think, again and again each day.

I know my brain and grief are doing this. I remember how, after my mother died, the world seemed wrapped in a hyperreal dimension for weeks and months. Whatever I passed – the palliative care hospital, a café where we had lunch – seemed somehow sharper, more distinct, like one of those old View-Master toys that made images seem even more self-consciously three-dimensional than the world really is. Once, as I walked Whiffle in the park, I had the overwhelming sense that my mother was walking beside me, her head in its little black hat at my shoulder.

"She *is* still with you," friends would say comfortingly. But I know the sense of an invisible companion is a common illusion for brains under stress. Perhaps it truly is a window to a spirit

world that gets opened at certain moments. But personally, I think it's just what grief does to us. It's as though our brains are working hard to stamp the individuals we've lost even more distinctly into our memories, because we will need them.

I don't believe in reunions and Rainbow Bridges, or in that divine consciousness watching every sparrow. But I do believe in the utter importance of memory. I believe the universe itself is a system for remembering, that everything is part of this vast and detailed record – the waves of light that come at us from the big bang, the layers of sediment that have fossilized archaic species, and each of us, individually, writing our journals and prayers.

We each have a past to be treasured and marked with significance – that is how identities continue in time. We have elegies to write.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

KATHERINE BITNEY is the author of four books of poetry, a collection of essays on nature and the text for a choral piece. A fifth collection of poems is under construction. She has worked as editor, mentor, writing instructor and arts juror for over three decades. She lives, gardens and writes in Winnipeg.

ALICE BURDICK is the author of four full-length poetry collections, *Simple Master*, *Flutter*, *Holler* and *Book of Short Sentences*. *Deportment*, a book of selected poems, came out in 2018 from Wilfrid Laurier University Press. She has been a judge for various awards, including the bpNichol Chapbook Award and the Latner Writers' Trust Poetry Prize. She co-owns an independent bookstore in Lunenburg called Lexicon Books and now lives in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia.

JENNA BUTLER is the author of three critically acclaimed books of poetry, *Seldom Seen Road*, *Wells* and *Aphelion*; a collection of ecological essays, *A Profession of Hope: Farming on the Edge of the Grizzly Trail*; and the Arctic travelogue *Magnetic North: Sea Voyage to Svalbard*. Her newest book, *Revery: A Year of Bees*, essays about women, beekeeping, trauma and climate grief, will be out with Wolsak and Wynn in 2020. A professor of creative writing and ecocriticism at Red Deer College, Butler lives in northern Alberta on an off-grid organic farm.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

MARILYN DUMONT is of Cree/Métis ancestry. Poet, writer and professor, she teaches with the Faculty of Native Studies and the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta. Her four collections of poetry have all won either provincial or national poetry awards: *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996), *green girl dreams Mountains* (2001), *that tongued belonging* (2007) and *The Pemmican Eaters* (2015). She was awarded the 2018 Lifetime Membership from the League of Canadian Poets for her contributions to poetry in Canada, and in 2019 was awarded the Alberta Lieutenant Governor's Distinguished Artist Award. She lives in Edmonton, AB.

BEN GALLAGHER is a poet, essayist and new father, currently in the middle of a PhD at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, researching non-linear pedagogy and poetic practices in community poetry workshops. Recent poems can be found in *untethered*, *Sewer Lid*, *The Puritan*, *(parenthetical)* and *Arc*. He lives in Lunenburg, NS.

CATHERINE GRAHAM's sixth poetry collection, *The Celery Forest*, was named a CBC Best Book of the Year and appears on their Ultimate Canadian Poetry list. Her debut novel, *Quarry*, won an Independent Publisher Book Awards gold medal for fiction, "The Very Best!" Book Awards for Best Fiction and was a finalist for the Sarton Women's Book Award for Contemporary Fiction and the Fred Kerner Book Award. *Æther: an out-of-body lyric* appears in 2020 with Wolsak and Wynn/Buckrider Books. She lives in Toronto.

CATHERINE GREENWOOD has lived and worked in British Columbia, New Brunswick, China and southeast England. Previous job titles include publications analyst, foreign expert, financial aid adjudicator and pet sitter. She has published two collections of poetry, *The Pearl King and Other Poems* and *The Lost Letters*. Her writing has appeared in many literary journals and anthologies, and has been recognized with several prizes, including a National Magazine Gold Award. She now lives in South Yorkshire where, as a PhD candidate at the University of Sheffield, she is pursuing an interest in Scottish Gothic poetry.

JANE EATON HAMILTON is the queer, non-binary, disabled author of nine books of creative non-fiction, memoir, fiction and poetry, including the 2016 novel *Weekend*, and two prior collections of short fiction. Their memoir was one of the UK *Guardian's* Best Books of the Year and a *Sunday Times* bestseller. They are the two-time winner of Canada's CBC Literary Award for fiction (2003/2014). They have had a Notable in BASS and three in BAE (2016/2018/2019) and have appeared in *The Journey Prize*, *Best Canadian Short Stories* and *Best Canadian Poetry*. They live near Vancouver, BC.

RICHARD HARRISON is the author of seven books of poetry, including the Governor General's Award-winning *On Not Losing My Father's Ashes in the Flood*. He teaches English and Creative Writing at Mount Royal University in Calgary, where he lives with his wife, Lisa.

DAVID HASKINS wanted to write ever since Enid Blyton sent him a handwritten postcard when he was seven. He also wanted to become a veterinary surgeon. He settled for mentorships under CanLit's A-listers Joe Rosenblatt, Austin Clarke, Matt Cohen, John Herbert, P.K. Page and others, and a career teaching English to high schoolers. His poetry books, *Reclamation* (Borealis, 1980) and *Blood Rises* (Guernica, 2020), and his literary memoir *This House Is Condemned* (Wolsak and Wynn, 2013) top a long list of published works that have won first place awards from the CBC, the Ontario Poetry Society, the Canadian Authors Association, gritLIT and Arts Hamilton. He continues to live in the family home in Grimsby, Ontario.

STEVEN HEIGHTON'S most recent books are a novel, *The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep*, and a poetry collection, *The Waking Comes Late*, which received the 2016 Governor General's Award for Poetry. His short fiction and poetry have received four gold National Magazine Awards and have appeared in the *London Review of Books*, *Poetry Magazine* (Chicago), *Tin House*, *Best American Poetry*, *The Literary Review*, *Agni*, *Zoetrope*, *Geist* and five editions of *Best Canadian Stories*. In 2020, he will publish two books, *Reaching Mithymna* – a non-fiction account of the Middle Eastern refugee influx on Lesbos, Greece – and a children's book drawing on the same events. Heighton is also a translator, an occasional teacher and a reviewer for the *New York Times Book Review*. He has been based in Kingston, Ontario, for thirty years.

THERESA KISHKAN lives on the Sechelt Peninsula with her husband, John Pass, in a house she and John built and where they raised their children. She has published fourteen books, most recently *Euclid's Orchard*, a collection of essays about family history, botany, mathematics and love (Mother Tongue Publishing, 2017). Her novella, *The Weight of the Heart*, is due out from Palimpsest Press in spring 2020.

CHRISTINE LOWTHER is the author of several books (memoir and poetry) and co-editor of two anthologies. She won the inaugural Rainy Coast Arts Award for Significant Accomplishment from the Pacific Rim Arts Society. Her work appears in collections like *Rising Tides*, *Sweet Water*, *Force Field* and *Canadian Ginger*. Chris now lives in Tla-o-qui-aht unceded territory.

CANISIA LUBRIN is a writer, editor, critic and teacher from St. Lucia, published and anthologized internationally with translations of her work into Spanish, Italian and forthcoming in French and German. Her poetry debut *Voodoo Hypothesis* (Buckrider Books, 2017) was named a CBC Best Book and garnered multiple award nominations. *The Dyzgraphxst* (M&S, 2020) is her sophomore book of poetry. She holds an MFA from the University of Guelph and lives in Ontario.

ALICE MAJOR has published eleven books of poetry and a prize-winning collection of essays, *Intersecting Sets: A Poet Looks at Science*. Recent awards include the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Distinguished Artist Award and an honorary doctorate from the University of Alberta. She served as Edmonton's first poet laureate, a city where she continues to live.

CATHERINE OWEN is the author of fifteen collections of poetry and prose, most recently *Riven* (ECW, 2020). Her work has been nominated for awards and won the Alberta Book Prize in 2010 for *Frenzy*. Along with this volume, she has also edited the anthology *The Other 23 and a Half Hours: Or Everything You Wanted to Know that Your MFA Didn't Teach You* (Wolsak & Wynn, 2015). She works in film props and writes book reviews at her Marrow blog at Wordpress.com. Born and raised in Vancouver, BC, she now lives in Edmonton, AB, again, this time in her 1905 house called Delilah.

JAMES PICARD has exhibited extensively in close to two hundred art exhibitions throughout North America and Europe, and next to world-renowned art legends such as Picasso, Matisse, Miró, and Warhol. He has also taught at several universities and has released three books on his art. He was the first artist to exhibit his paintings at the historical Alcatraz Prison in San Francisco, part of his *The Dark & The Wounded* painting series and world art tour, which he filmed and turned into a documentary film that won awards across the North American film festival circuit in 2017/18, culminating in a screening in May 2018 at the 71st Cannes International Film Festival in France. He currently resides in California.

NIKKI REIMER writes poetry, non-fiction and micro-reviews, and dabbles in art. Published books are *My Heart is a Rose Manhattan* (Talon Books, 2019), *DOWNVERSE* (Talon Books, 2014) and *[sic]* (Frontenac House, 2010). She

continues to live in Calgary, AB, on the traditional territories of the people of Treaty 7.

WAUBGESHIG RICE is an author and journalist from Wasauksing First Nation on Georgian Bay. His first short story collection, *Midnight Sweatlodge*, was inspired by his experiences growing up in an Anishinaabe community, and won an Independent Publishers Book Award in 2012. His debut novel, *Legacy*, followed in 2014. A French translation of *Legacy* was published in 2017. His latest novel, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, was released in 2018 and quickly became a bestseller. He presently lives in Sudbury, Ontario, with his wife and son.

LISA RICHTER is the author of a book of poetry, *Closer to Where We Began* (Tightrope Books, 2017). Her work has previously appeared in *The New Quarterly*, *CV2*, *The Puritan*, *The Malahat Review*, *Literary Review of Canada* and the anthology *Jack Layton: Art in Action* (Quattro Books, 2013). Her next collection of poems, *Nautilus and Bone*, is forthcoming with Frontenac House in fall 2020. She lives in Toronto.

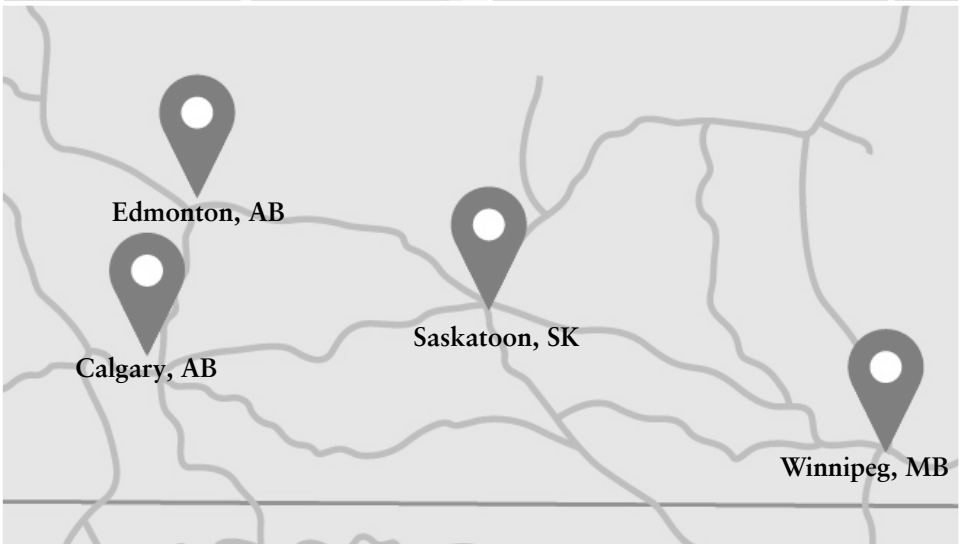
LYNN TAIT is a Toronto-born poet/photographer. Her poems have appeared in various literary journals including *Vallum*, *FreeFall*, and in over one hundred anthologies. She's also published a chapbook and co-authored a book with four other poets. She currently resides in Sarnia, Ontario.

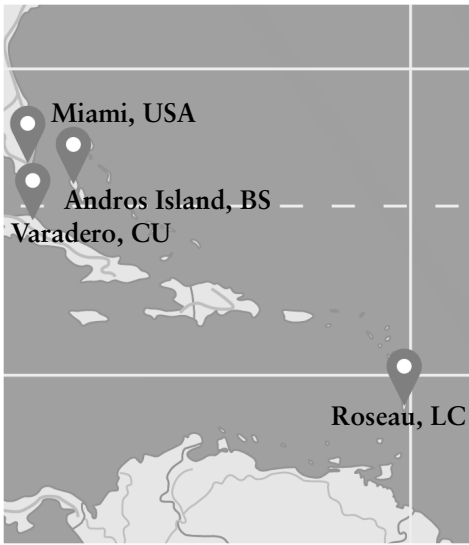
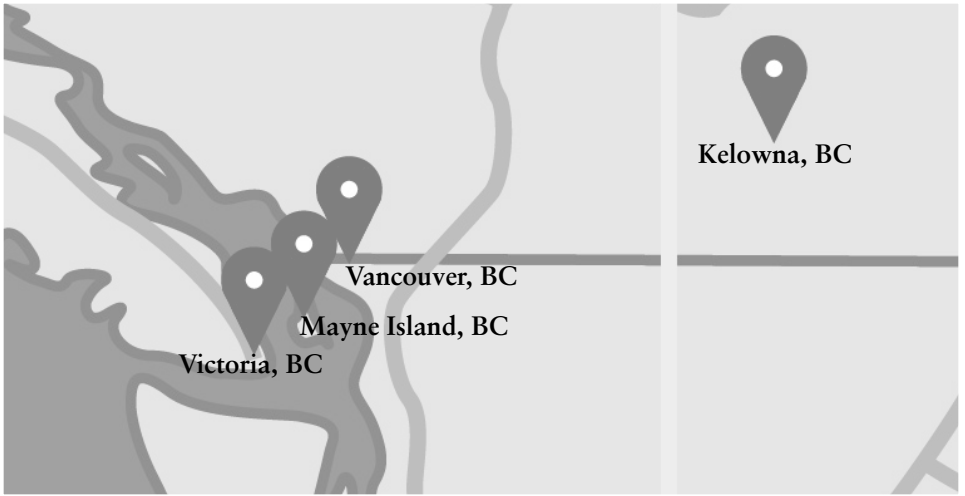
SHARON THESEN has been living, working, teaching and writing in British Columbia, from Kamloops to Prince George

to Vancouver (for a long while), and more recently in the Okanagan Valley. A poet, editor and critic, she is Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing at UBC's Okanagan campus.

ONJANA YAWNGHWE is the author of two books of poetry, *Fragments, Desire* (Oolichan, 2017) and *The Small Way* (Caitlin, 2018). She recently illustrated the novel *Little Blue Encyclopedia (for Vivian)* by Hazel Jane Plante and has illustrations forthcoming in *The Broken Boat* by Daniela Elza. She is currently working on a graphic novel about her family and Myanmar (Burma). She still lives in Coquitlam, BC.

DANIEL ZOMPARELLI is the author of *Davie Street Translations* (Talonbooks), and *Rom Com* (Talonbooks) co-written with Dina Del Bucchia. His first collection of short stories, *Everything Is Awful and You're a Terrible Person* (Arsenal Pulp Press), was nominated for the 2018 Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize. He is an executive producer and host of the podcast *I'm Afraid That*, produced with Little Everywhere. He lives in Los Angeles.





FROM THE PREFACE

“*Locations of Grief: An Emotional Geography* is an act of what the Welsh call ‘hiraeth’ or, in essence, a commemoration of the ‘homesick grief for the lost places of your past.’ This kind of grief particularly relates to how death creates or deepens a sense of homesickness, establishing a new sense of the world as something transient, shifting, scarred. Or even, sometimes, making it more beloved, the locus of memory becoming, in its present, an ineffable realm of longing.”

Exploring the landscapes of death and grief, this collection takes the reader through a series of essays, drawn together from twenty-four Canadian writers that reach across different ages, ethnicities and gender identities as they share their thoughts, struggles and journeys relating to death. Be it the meditation on the loss of a beloved dog who once solaced a departed parent, the tragic suicide of a stranger or the deep pain of losing a brother, *Locations of Grief* is defined by its range of essays exploring all the facets of mourning, and how the places in our lives can be irreversibly changed by the lingering presence of death.

CATHERINE OWEN is the author of fifteen collections of poetry and prose, most recently *Riven* (ECW, 2020). Her work has been nominated for awards and won the Alberta Book Prize in 2010 for *Frenzy*. Along with this volume, she has also edited the anthology *The Other 23 and a Half Hours: Or Everything You Wanted to Know that Your MFA Didn't Teach You* (Wolsak & Wynn, 2015). She works in film props and writes book reviews at her Marrow blog at Wordpress.com. Born and raised in Vancouver, BC, she now lives in Edmonton, AB, again, this time in her 1905 house called Delilah.

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