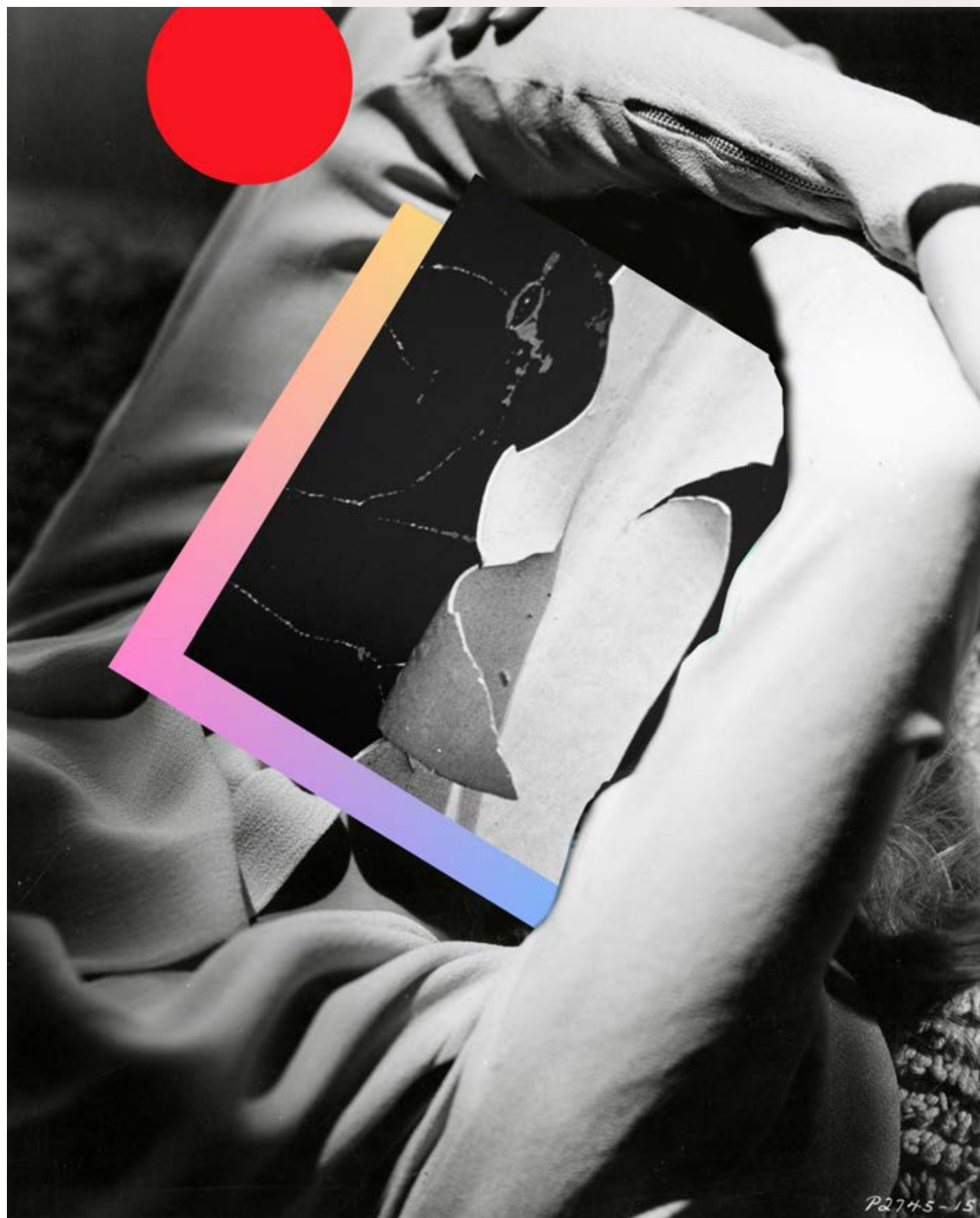


L'ESPRIT

DE

L'ESCALIER



L'ESPRIT DE L'ESCALIER

KOFFLER DIGITAL

L'esprit de l'escalier

Editor: Letticia Cosbert

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L'esprit de l'escalier

- 1 *L'esprit de l'escalier* by Letticia Cosbert
- 3 *It's Just Life* by Dainesha Nugent-Palanche
- 7 *The Simulacrum Precedes the Original* by Anya Moryoussef
- 9 *11:11* by Nicole Collins
- 15 *On Death* by Patricia Ritacca
- 19 *The People You Love* by Mona Filip
- 21 *Death Cleaning*: Letticia Cosbert in conversation with C. Jonasson
- 28 *Other Lives* by CCC
- 31 *"The Storyteller Borrows his Authority from Death"* by Eric Beck Rubin
- 33 *Deaths / Memorials / Births* by Erika Defreitas
- 39 *Crescent Notes* by Aaditya Aggarwal
- 43 Contributor biographies, image credits

L'ESPRIT
DE
L'ESCALIER

by LETTICIA COSBERT

"What is there possibly left for us to be afraid of, after we have dealt face to face with death and not embraced it? Once I accept the existence of dying as a life process, who can ever have power over me again?" - Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*

I am terrified of death, of dying and of losing my body. Not of the void of what comes after life, as some of those who have contributed work to this publication have expressed, nor of the respite the Church (take your pick) describes as laying down one's earthly burdens (by *the* riverside? by a four way traffic stop? in a McDonald's Play Place?). Yet, in spite of the fear, I approached this project with unusual ease. How lovely it is to read Patricia Ritacca's proleptic obituary written in 1996 at the age of 13, unaware of her impending Hodgkins Lymphoma diagnosis. The billowing, pinkish grey of Nicole Collins' *11:11* is nothing short of elegiac - in fact, I am (nearly) certain Propertius, too, has a couplet on the warmth of freshly baked bread. In this collection of words, sounds and visual art dubious grandmothers, philosophers and their Volvos, replica, sleep and featherweight memorials all find their place.

Though, I'm not sure that my fear of death—and those who share it—has been voiced within this collection. So, it is my duty (self appointed) that I share it here with you.

I have lived a fairly normal life without much incident. I grew up in New York, attended a small, quiet Catholic private school, I moved to Toronto to attend university, I studied for many years (ten) and now work for an extraordinary arts organization. No one in my immediate family has died before it seemed reasonable to do so. But, for those who were not similarly protected by educational institutions, overbearing Caribbean parents, or a masochistic strain of ambition, and even for some who *were*, I saw them lose their bodies in the most violent of ways.

As a child, I spent my summers in Brooklyn, visiting my cousins and supervised by my aunts. Somewhere around my tenth birthday, my Uncle Frankie was shot point blank. He bled out and died on the sidewalk as we sat confused on the Brownstone stoop. I spent the summer I turned sixteen living in Scarborough, working at Canada's Wonderland, eating too much pizza. My cousin Jonathan went missing that year, his body later found on the icy shoulder of the 401, bullet wounds to his head and hands. "Execution style" the papers called it. I can only remember his smile. Two summers ago my friend of many years, LeFranc Matthews, was gunned down at an after hours party in Kensington Market. LeFranc emigrated here in the 90s to study engineering at UofT, he had two young children and loved to party. His sisters sang "Three Little Birds" as the casket was carried out of the church. I shut my eyes.

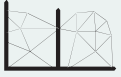
And then there are the names: Trayvon Martin, Abdirahman Abdi, Michael Brown, Pierre Coriolan, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Jermaine Carby, Philando Castile, Andrew Loku, Alton Sterling, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Sumaya Dalmar, Walter Scott, Laquan McDonald, Aiyana Jones, Alex Wettlaufer, and too many more.

These names, these stories and the conceivability of losing one's body are extraordinary - *not* ordinary, *very* unusual. I carried this fear with me (on the 504 streetcar, the baking goods aisle of FreshCo, as I turned the key to open my front door) until it became familiar, absolute. Death's causality is firmly fastened to class, race, gender and ability, and cannot be catalogued as a comprehensible universality. In turns, it is grim for some, awaited for others, beautiful for these, confounding for those.

by DAINESHA NUGENT-PALACHE



Dainesha Nugent-Palache speaks to her parents, in their home, about her ever-present anxiety over their death.



Dainesha: I have a lot of anxiety around my parents dying. Like that's the biggest source of anxiety for me...so yeah, I guess I'm just going to talk to you guys about death!



Mom: sure.



Dainesha: So I guess I'll start by asking, did you share the same anxiety around your parents passing away?

Mom: No. No.

Dainesha: You didn't?



Mom: No. I didn't. The fact that I grew up with my grandparents. My dad wasn't too far away, and my mother was not there at a young age. And it wasn't anything that I thought about, I wasn't worried. I guess it's the fact that I had family members who passed away, and we see, you know, the process of dying and death. That kind of a way, so.

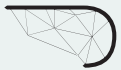


Dainesha: So it was just like a normal fact of life?

Mom: It was a normal part of life.



Dainesha: Dad?



Dad: Hmmm?

Dainesha: Are you not going to answer?

Dad: ah wah yuh wan me say now?

Dainesha: I literally just asked...



Dad: wuh you asking me?

Dainesha: Did you have anxiety around your parents passing away? Is this something...



Dad: I nuh have no anxiety. I expect death. I expect it.

Dainesha: But like, you were never fearful?



Dad: No no.

Dainesha: No? Well I don't know. I've talked about this too. I feel like I grew up in a household where we talked about death a lot. Like, it was really normalized.

Dad: Right!

Mom: Yes, yes.

Dad: It's normal, cuz death is a sure thing, so it's natural. Yuh know it gon happen. All ah we gon die.

Dainasha: I get that. But I guess for me, I just don't know how I'd deal with it. Like I guess, are you ever prepared? Is that something...

Dad: You can prepare for your death if you know, but...

Mom: not necessarily that you know, but you can prepare ahead of time. Like say well I'll save towards a funeral, stuff like that. You know? In the back of your head you're thinking I need to put away, or I need to have insurance incase I pass away I don't leave a big strain on my kids, or my husband. That kind of a way.

Dainasha: But I guess I'm speaking more specifically to the death of a parent. Are you ever prepared for that?

Mom: Well yes I did prepare for my mother...

Dainasha: I guess that's different though...

Mom: Yes...the fact that I knew she had alzheimer's, and I'm that type of person, I don't like to do things like sudden, I get confused so I like to do things ahead of time so I'm not all stressed out and anxious.

Dainasha: I don't know. You guys are like talking about this in such a logistical way, when it's an emotional thing. Like you guys, it's just so, it's weird. It's really like matter of fact to you. You guys are like "yeah I know this person's going to die. So yeah, I prepared for it" I don't know!

Mom: Remember like i had mom's dress out for over a year! Like more than a year

Dainasha: I know that!

Mom: so you shouldn't be anxious. You shouldn't, you know...you should start thinking positive and, you know. I don't know how to tell you, but don't be stressed out or anything.

Dad: Don't stress bout our death. What is to be, have to be.

Dainasha: That's easier said than done though. I don't know.

Dad: is probly true I see a lot of death, so it dun come no way to me.

Dainasha: I feel like there's been a lot of death in my life too, but like it's different when it's your parents. Ummm...I don't know. Do you think that if you guys died, that I would be prepared, like at this point in life?

Dad: we're talking now, so we're telling you to be prepared. Mom: [laughing]

Dad: [deep belly laughter]

Mom: you know when the time comes, you will be surprised. Don't forget you will never be alone.

Dainasha: that's...true...?

Mom: yes, because you know how the family is close in that sense.

Dainesha: I'm not that close to the family...

Mom: yes, maybe not, but they're close with you. And they will be there to hold you up. Always remember that. Okay?

Dainesha: yeah.

Mom: yeah.

Dainesha: Ummmmm...and I guess you guys have kind of answered this but, I guess my last question is are you afraid of dying?

Dad: No.

Mom: No. I'm not. The only...my wish is for--what I always pray for is me not to die before my kids pass the worst. Like finish college or university, and get a stable job, and on their own. That kind of a way. That was a...

Dad: I only wish that I don't die a bad death. Like a big accident or something. But talking about death, I can just sleep away. It nuh really matter.

Dainesha: So you guys feel like you've accomplished everything in your life?

Dad: mi nah ave no money.

Mom & Dad: [laugh]

Dad: So mi neva accomplish everyting.

Mom: well, umm...I had done a lot, like helping people and so forth. So I'm content. I think I did maybe not finish my job on earth, I don't think I'm finished from helping people and making people happy, but I am content with what I have done and have seen. Because I think all people are put here on earth for a purpose.

Dainesha: Yep. I agree with that. Okay. Ummm...I guess I'll leave it at that...

Dad: so wuh, yuh writing an article?

Dainesha: I'm not. One of my colleagues is writing a publication, and she's asking different people to just do something around death

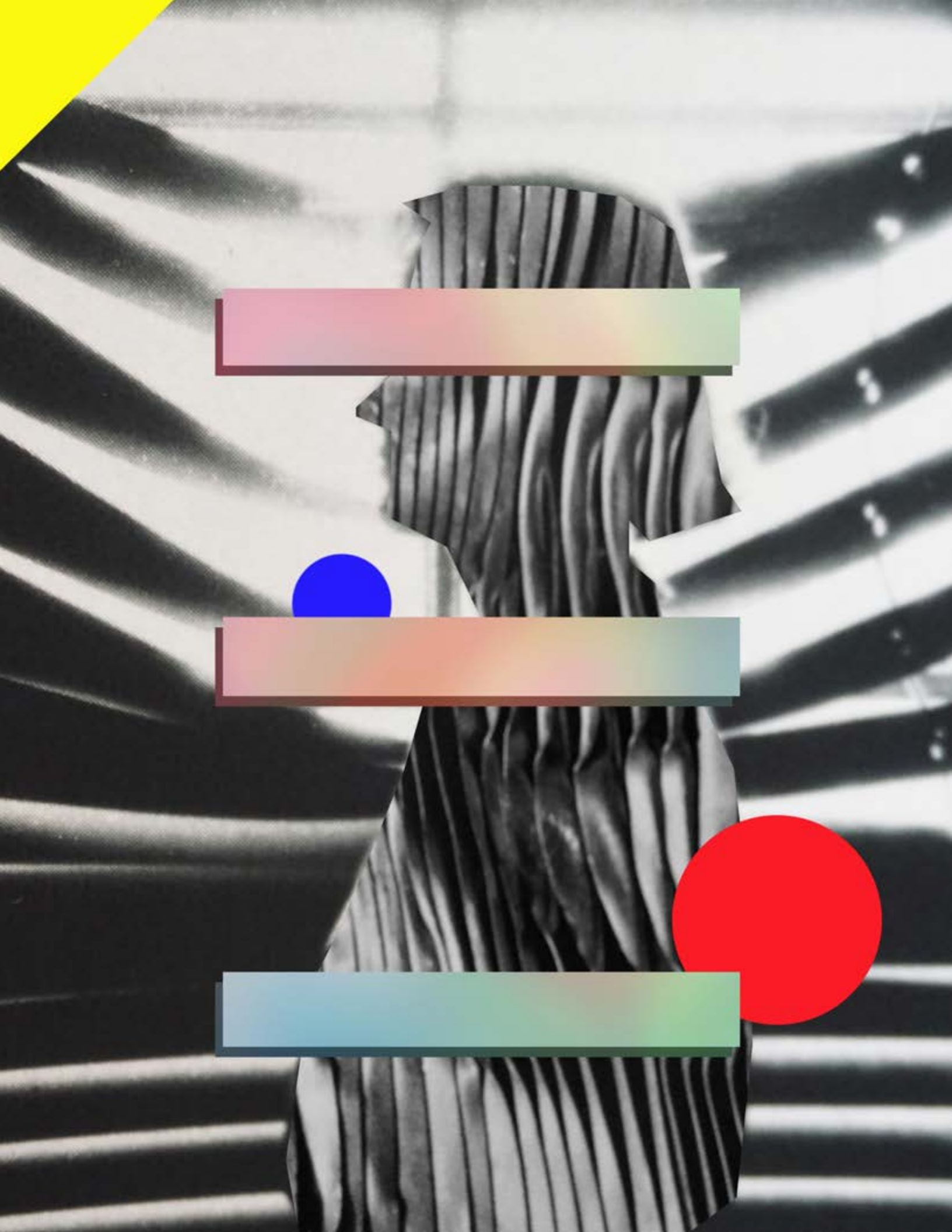
Dad: juss tell her seh death is sure. Nah worry herself ova death.

Dainesha: It's me who's worried!

Dad: well, yuh nah worry. It's just life, Alrigh?

Dainesha: [laughing] okay.

Dad: focus pon life.



THE

SIMULACRUM

PRECEDES

THE

ORIGINAL

by ANYA MORYOUSSEF

Death is supposed to be the only definitive thing in life, but when I saw my grandmother die, I didn't believe it. Her death was the first indication that she couldn't be trusted. Her death may as well have been a story I heard.

Like the one about her mother who died from eating a poison berry on Christmas Eve 1923 (or bled to death during an illegal abortion after finally giving birth to a son the year before); or of her father who perished of a broken heart after his beloved wife's passing (or his cirrhotic liver after 72 hours of binge drinking following the abrupt termination of his affair with Miss Johannesburg by Miss Johannesburg's father, the town mayor); or the story of my grandmother's second failed marriage to the womanizing cripple who gambled away their fortune (or was it that she regretted marrying this man, who in a temper had thrown an employee out of a seventh-storey window). The inaccuracies may be due to my own flawed memory; many of these stories were told to me as a child; many seem too close to a book I've read or movie I've seen. Didn't Snow White eat a poison berry?

Maybe it was the recurring dreams that finally convinced me - though they were also a reminder that I couldn't be sure - that it was a fact, but it was several years before I stopped waiting for my Grandmother to send a letter revealing her whereabouts. I have to believe the ashes we strew at her funeral were those of her flesh, and that she did not have any life left in her when they wheeled her body into the incinerator; and I have to believe that the doctor that pronounced her dead was correct, and that the image of her gaunt cheeks, her brittle hair, her dry lips, and her depthless eyes - her death mask - was in fact her real face.

by NICOLE COLLINS



November 21, 2009

"Bhikkhus, all is burning. And what is the all that is burning?

"The eye is burning, forms are burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning, also whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with eye-contact for its indispensable condition, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion. I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with griefs, with despairs..."

Awake 5:20 am

Go to the mat and cushion and sit, despite tumultuous resistance.

Drink coffee shower call taxi

Taxi drives slowly past 26 as we stand on the porch staring after him.
He turns the corner, backs up a little, goes forward again and finally, in fits and starts backs up to us.

To Woodbine and Kingston Road

He asks how we want to go so I say Lakeshore but he turns west, clearly confused. Waves of emotion frustration irritation grief wash over me and I abdicate direction-giving to Michael. I close my eyes and let the tears come. It's the longest most silent taxi ride.

We get to the corner and he can't even figure out that we need to turn left so we get out and walk, past the picturesque graveyard and church, over to the crematorium.

It's like a cottage. Jacques pulls up on his bike, a massive ride just undertaken. Stanley the funeral director is there waiting for us.

We go straight in, through a bland generic chapel, through double doors to what looks like a foundry.
It is, I suppose.

Lying on a platform about 4 feet up is an oblong brown cardboard box. It is all very matter-of-fact.
An attendant, (the cremator?) in a white lab coat and long hair pulled back in a ponytail, stands by to get the thing done.

Stanley hands me a white rose to place on the box, a touching gesture that reminds me that I didn't even think of flowers... instead they are strewn about my house, sent by coworkers and friends. I place it on the box, hold my hand there for several seconds, pressing it down. I feel that I am pressing down the body in some way, holding it in place just a little longer. And I'm holding myself up too.

Jacques says "just a minute please" and brings forth 3 sticks of incense, handing 2 to Michael and I, holding up a lighter. I let out a sigh and blow out Jacques lighter.

Stanley reaches in with his lighter too, I suspected he was a smoker. We lay the lit incense on top of the box.

The cremator opens the door to the oven and then he and Stanley shove the box right in, really putting their shoulders into it. There is something deeply satisfying about this physical effort. Perfect engagement.

The door is closed and I am invited to turn the switch
It is a dial, I twist it towards on and it pops back into place.

The oven fires up with a roar.

Jacques asks: is it ok if I chant to your Mom? Yes yes yes

He pulls out the wooden gourd-like instrument that he uses to call us to practice and begins to keep beat on it while chanting in Korean. Strong clear voice.

I have no idea what he is saying and it is absolutely perfect.

Overcome with emotion I remember "hap chong" and clasp my hands together, breathing as slowly as I can manage. As the chant gets louder, speeds up, as what is left of Fern succumbs to the flames, I automatically shift to diamond hap chong, interlocked fingers grasped together. It is very comforting.

The moment Jacques has finished chanting, Stanley is at my side asking if I want to pick up the remains or should he deliver them to me. I opt for the latter.

Michael reminds me to remind the cremator that I want all of the metal and ceramic parts remaining. It is in writing but he is right to confirm this.

We tumble out into the chapel and then the hallway. There is water to drink. We marvel at the sound of the roaring oven as we step outside.

I turn back, look up and there she is, billowing out the chimney, pinkish grey, rolling, shimmering and then breaking apart, dissipating, drifting on the breeze, separating, thinning out until she is no longer distinguishable from the grey November sky. It is breathtaking GO

I make strangled choking sounds of awe It seems to go on and on, so much smoke

And then it simply stops Abruptly

An intake, rush of breath I sob
I laugh

There she goes

Later in the day the doorbell rings and it is Stanley, for the last time.
He carries a blue and lavender paper bag, the kind you might use to present a gift at an anniversary party.

Absurdly, I wonder where the remains are.

He comes in and I bring him to the sideboard where he pulls out a box the size of a large brick, wrapped in brown paper, an official envelope attached, paperwork for the burial.

These are the ashes.

They are surprisingly heavy.

In another, smaller cardboard box, a heavy plastic bag containing the knee and hip joints.

Very heavy. On four different occasions they gave her new mobility. And then, I now realize, they kept her grounded. Not anymore.

Both boxes are warm to the touch, like freshly baked bread. We talk formalities, paperwork, and Stanley is gone.

I have placed the ashes on the bench in my studio, directly in front of the mat and cushion.

They wait patiently.

I have a standing appointment. Forty---nine days.

I'll do my best.



Leonardo Da Vinci Academy of Arts & Sciences

100 ALLANHURST DRIVE
ISLINGTON, ONTARIO

Patricia

GRADE 8 GUIDANCE ASSIGNMENT

- ✓ 1. Read the article "How to conquer your fear of heights" and make notes to summarize the main points.
- ✓ 2. Suggest another TITLE for the article.
- ✓ 3. What is the background of the author.
4. **Write your own obituary** the way you would like it to read.
- ✓ 5. What have you learned from reading this article.

Patricia

How to conquer your fear of heights

March 9/96

JOHN RAU

Mr. Rau is dean of the Indiana University School of Business and a former CEO of LaSalle National Bank in Chicago.

YOU are at 25,000 feet, descending into yet another city where people are waiting for you. There are important things to do. You are a senior executive and have risen higher and achieved more than you even dreamed of 20 years ago. Your income is so high that you round it out to the nearest \$100,000. As another year begins, you look ahead and conclude that you ought to feel that you are on top of the world, except for one thing: You're scared to death.

Success is not what you thought it would be. It is not a cradle or a hideaway. It is a cage, suspended from the ceiling by the thinnest of threads.

Welcome to the club.

Regardless of how high you are in the corporation and how much power you possess, you can lose it overnight. Just as tension spoils the golf swing, the fear of losing our job becomes paralyzing and makes the loss more likely.

Fortunately, there are ways to eliminate this fear. The fact is failure is not fatal, but most of us can't picture ourselves outside of our current "comfort zone." Here are three exercises to relax the tension and reduce the fear:

- **Get paid at least once for a skill or hobby.** It's easy to feel trapped by the job market and worry about how you would ever find something else that pays. The reality is that we all have marketable skills such as writing, speaking, consulting, or designing and selling things. It is how we

"package" these with fixed expectations in a single administrative role at just one company that makes us less digestible by the job market.

Identify the skills you could turn to over the next six months. Make an effort to get at least one client for your services. It is important that you get paid; psychologically, when you have done it once you believe you can do it again. You can always tell the client that you are doing this to give the money to charity.

- **Live way below your income for three weeks.** I'm talking about 20 to 25 per cent of your standard of living, excluding housing. Obviously, you cannot sell the house as part of this experiment, but in every other aspect, budget and live that way. What most people find is that the big expenses that have to be cut are the ones that you took on to prove to other people that you could afford them, not the ones that give you any particular joy.

- **Do a full-scale liquidation drill.** On paper, liquidate everything you have — house, car, gadgets, investments. Call a real estate agent in a town where you would like to live. Find out what it would take to rent a good town house. Apply 40 per cent of your assets to living costs. Calculate how many years you could live with the other 60 per cent buying an acceptable lifestyle in a vibrant community.

These exercises will convince you that being trapped by the money is mostly in your head. But then you'll say: "It's not just the money. What will I do, who will I be?"

We are programmed to achieve, to please others. We're convinced that the external symbols of success are what bring satisfaction and draw people to us. We have seen people who were the centre of the crowd one day only to be shunned six months later because they suffered major reversals. This identity fear is also the central issue I see working with executives contemplating merging or selling their companies and executive succession. Here the visualization and experimenting exercises take a little more effort. But those who can visualize alternatives generally handle these transitions more successfully. Here are the drills:

- **Spend time with a couple of people who pursue satisfaction by constantly changing possessions and status symbols.** Find a person on his or her third trophy spouse. Pick out the one whose cars and houses must always be upgraded. Try to pin down the ones who cannot sit still because there is always another exotic place to be. How do they make you feel? Ask yourself whether this is how you would like your son or daughter to be when they grow up.

Ask your spouse and kids to list the things that they like about you,

and how they would improve your relationship with them. You'll find they won't mention your job or talk about money. They'll talk about being a partner, knowing more of what is going on with you, having more time, feeling more loved, and seeing you more happy and relaxed. Keep their lists and read them whenever you feel anxious.

- **Write your obituary.** Make it long, what you hope your mother, father and your favourite teacher would like to read. Think about when you are gone and what you would like it to say, not what it would say today given the trend line you are on. If you are like most people, you will tear up the first draft because it will be about accomplishments, successes and positions in organizations. You'll realize you want it to be about character, doing useful things, being a good partner, an exceptional friend. Put a copy in your locked desk drawer and another in the secret compartment of your briefcase. Read it every morning, and whenever that trapped feeling hits.

Obviously, you do not need to quit your job because of these fears. In fact, doing these exercises will result in your doing the job even better and enjoying it more. The trap is believing that your life is only your career. The solution is just a simple change of perspective. Understand that your career should be living your life your way. Be comforted that the world cannot take away anything from you unless you give it the power to make those external things your source of satisfaction.

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ON DEATH

by PATRICIA RITACCA

I came across my obituary the other night.

It was written on a faded lined sheet of paper and uncovered in a box in my basement—homework assigned by my Grade 8 Guidance teacher, who also happened to be my father. In retrospect, it was an odd and potentially triggering assignment, to give a group of thirteen year olds the task of reflecting upon their own lives after an imagined death. But I didn't see it that way at the time, and clearly, neither did my father.

My father is a man who had known death at an early age, losing his mother at 10 years old to an aneurism, one morning over breakfast. It was a moment that solidified death as a part of his reality, and he would navigate the rest of his life stoically confronting it. My father's natural acceptance of death only partially explains the Grade 8 Guidance Assignment. This was a chance for his students to consider the lives we wanted to lead. *What qualities of character were highlighted? What did we value in this life? What are we living for?*

My obituary had little to do with an examination on mortality, nor did it describe the richness and nuances of what I wished a younger me would have envisioned for the life of future me. Rather, it was a reflection of a Southern Italian Catholic upbringing. A summary of those immigrant values of a strong work ethic and family devotion. In my insular world,

I could not have imagined my role in life to be anything other than a combination of mother-wife-daughter-teacher. And, I could only conceive of a life that paid equal importance in both landing a stable career and earning access into heaven.

What my 1996 obituary could not have predicted was that in 2006 I would be diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma, and that I would spend every day of that year meditating upon my own mortality. This nonstop rumination would eventually exhaust me to the point of indifference, shifting my fear of death to the much more rational fear of chronic pain (to which death would be the only liberation).

Those sick days were regularly passed at the cemetery, one of the few public spaces that was safe for me to navigate. Chemotherapy and radiation had destroyed my immune system, leaving me susceptible to serious infection, so I found company among the dead. Visits to the graves of my ancestors were a (seemingly morbid) relief from the confines of my parents' house. Betrayed by my physical body, I felt closer to their souls than the living. This comfort with death—along with our hard working nature and dedication to family—is something that my father and I now have in common. I share his hope to be able to welcome death when the time comes; and in those those final moments, when the boundaries become blurred, to find peace.

March 7, 196

Patricia

Grade 8 Guidance Assignment

How to conquer your fear of heights

R

- ① - Even if you are high in a corporation and hold a lot of power, you can still lose it overnight
- fear of a job loss becomes paralyzing
 - failure is not fatal

reduce fear - Get paid at least once for a skill or hobby

- we all have marketable skills, it's how we "package" them

- identify skills you could turn to

- live way below your income for three weeks
- 20-25% of standard living

- big expenses that have to be cut are the ones that most people want to prove to others that you can afford - not the ones that give you any joy

Do a full-scale liquidation drill

- on paper - liquidate everything you have and call a real estate agent and rent a good town house

- will convince you that being trapped by \$ is in your head.

- suffered major reversals → a fear found in executives contemplating merging or selling their companies and executive succession

- visualize alternatives, handle transitions better

Drills

- Spend time with a couple of people who pursue satisfaction by constantly changing possessions and status symbols.

- ask spouse + kids to list nice things about you

- keep lists and read whenever you are anxious

Write your obituary

- make it long + about character

- ↳ read it whenever you feel trapped.
- don't quit your job because of these fears
- TRAP → your life is your career.
- solution → a simple change of perspective

② Another title for this article could be:
"A guide to help you cope with Executive Stress"

③ The background of the author is: John Rau is dean of the Indiana University School of Business and ^{he} used to be a CEO of LaSalle National Bank in Chicago. &

obituary ④ Patricia Rutaca lived a full and long life. ^{in Toronto} She had a loving family: a father ^{Salvatore}, a mother ^{Maria}, 3 sisters ^{Virginia, Laura and Christine}, a husband and 2 children ^{Christine and Mary}. She was hard working, never gave up; a perfectionist. She sometimes went over the limit in working but overall she was a loving mother and obedient daughter and a loyal friend.

During her career as a teacher, Patricia worked hard trying to help improve her students as well as herself. She will be missed by many ~~of~~ of these students as well as her family and friends. ^{They hope in her new life she will live in peace and harmony.}

⑤ I have learned that there are ways to cope with and deal with the fear of a loss of a job/career or any loss at that matter. Though it may take some research and some time to search for the solution.

THE
PEOPLE

by MONA FILIP

YOU
LOVE

It's been my only question. Ever since I was little, at that age when children incessantly ask "why." My question was never really concerned with reason and cause. It was more of a "what."

I could never fathom non-existence as the opposite of life - that we simply cease to be remains entirely incomprehensible to me. The certitudes of religion elude me just as much as the theories of nothingness. I find it impossible to conceive that consciousness can simply end. A complete failure of imagination, as it would mean the end of imagination itself. All imagination does is conjure up worlds - nothingness seems to me the domain of unthinking.

We fear what we cannot imagine. Learning to live without an answer sums up the human condition. Seeking answers is entrenched in human nature - so we are doomed, then, to feed our own worst anxiety. I try to tell myself the only path forward is accepting the mystery and relishing the search.

Though, something shifted when you died. A clear sense now of another side.

"Paths that cross will cross again," says Patti Smith. So, I indulge in thinking that parallel universes or afterlives could be real, that time may not be linear. Like opening a door and passing into another room. Where you'll be waiting.

DEATH

CLEANING

On a sunny January afternoon, Letticia Cosbert meets C. Jonasson for a conversation on death cleaning, the Swedish practice of decluttering your life of possessions in advance of your death, so that your family is not left with this, sometimes immense, burden.

Letticia Cosbert: What drew you to the concept of death cleaning?

C. Jonasson: For the most part, it came from personal experience. My mother, who's ninety-three, decided she was going to move out of her very big house and thought: "what am I going to do with my stuff?" She started looking at her stuff and asking questions like, "who wants it?" and "does it have value to people anymore?" Probably five, six, seven years ago she said "I'm going to make a list--people can sign up for what they want, and let's not be sentimental about it, and I want to be fair about it." I didn't take the initiative, it was my mom.

L: Does your mother have a cultural connection to death cleaning, or did she come to it from another route?

C: She's Scottish-Irish. The other part of my heritage is Scandinavian, but my mother's not like that at all. Still, she's a pragmatist. If she wanted something, she would just get it. And if she's not going to be using it, she'd give it to a person who wants it.

L: Does the pragmatism come from being ninety-three?

C: I think it came more from discussions she had. She has four granddaughters and two grandsons, and the split between boys and girls is interesting in terms of who holds onto objects, and what objects mean to them. The girls were interested in things like china and silver, and a number of other things that she collected as part of her life. The boys, not so much.

L: So what do you make of that? Because I think even in the text that we both read by Margaret Magnusson, *The Gentle Art of Death Cleaning*, the author emphasizes the relationship women, in particular, have had to death cleaning. Whether it was called that or not, it seems to have been a task that women always undertook.

C: Well, it falls to women to deal with the details of...a life. A domestic life particularly, in that the domestic has always been a women's role. So, you know, a parent dies, or a relative dies, and it's assumed that the woman will know how to deal with all of this stuff that's left behind.

L: And then also at the same time, I guess...almost irrationally, according to your anecdotes, wanting to collect all of these things too—doubling their store.

C: You and I were talking the other day about the fact that you're interested in—and you're a young person--china and collecting...

L: Crystal!

C: Crystal! I think that there's still this idea that objects are what make a home, and what create the kind of domestic environment that you want. And in some cases, you know, when you grow up in homes where you've had meals that are big celebrations, then those objects do represent something of significance in terms of the way you celebrate, the way you come together. And so it's not really irrational in that case. But, an object that meant a great deal to a person forty, fifty years ago will not have the same meaning for you. So, bone china may not be where your head is at, or where someone who's younger is at these days.

L: As a society, I feel like we're moving away from wanting to have Stuff. I mean, I still want things, but I often feel like I shouldn't. We're being pushed to digitize, downsize, and live, you know, smaller and more compactly for the sake of the environment and personal economics. So, it's strange, because I still desperately want to have your china and your crystal! I don't know why. [LAUGHTER]

C: Well it's interesting because remember--or maybe you don't remember, maybe you're too young--but there used to be a room in a house that nobody went into, and it was covered with sheets and plastic...

L: Oh, we still have that at my house!

C: Okay, so only when somebody very important came to the house would you use that room...

L: That person never came. [LAUGHTER]

C: Right! So that somehow has gone out of fashion. But you live in the space you have, and you engage with the space you have, and that space is not precious anymore. It's your environment, and you mould it to fit the kind of lifestyle and culture that you want it to be. So that may be books and music. At one time there might have been an upright piano, but now it's just a little Bose mini deck that works with your iPod. So that the elements of what you consider to be a rich life are still there, but they're different. And so china may represent something to you, you may love bone china--it's beautiful. It may not be too practical, but you may love it as an object in and of itself. It's hard to say, um...but I think at a certain point it also becomes a burden. So when you're young you're acquiring, you're trying to get, you're working to acquire things. As you get older, you need things less and less. You value experiences more and more.

L: What then, do you make of Magnusson's admonishment to those who refused to sort out their acquisitions: "Some people can't wrap their head around death, and these people leave a mess after them. Did they think that they're immortal?"

C: [LAUGHTER] Well. I'm a bit on her side. Unless you die relatively young, when you might not have expected to die, I think her comment is fair. I do think if you have an abnormal attachment to a lot of objects or whatever, you might have a bit of an issue there [Laughter].

L: Elaborate?

C: There is plenty of good that comes of growing older, and also some bad. For me, as I grow older, there's certain weariness that increases. It's not that you're tired of life, but you understand that there's a cost to living. And at a certain point, you want to lay that down. You want to be finished with it. And I think that--I think the worst thing in the world would be the prospect of living forever. I think that would be horrifying.

L: Immortality is my dream, but I would be smart enough to also ask for eternal youthfulness. You know, I associate old age with stubbornness and with a certain difficulty of moving forward, at least ideologically. Death cleaning to me seems counterintuitive to the way some folks desperately clutch to out dated ideas. What do you think?

C: Well, they are also hanging onto things that you will never understand. Understanding what it's been like to grow up in a very particular way, and, where there wasn't all this immediate connectivity, where you could take time to learn, where your entertainment was music with your family or playing a game of scrabble. Those are the things that are really intangible and hard to convey, and what you end up seeing, perhaps is their inability to cope with the loss of a world that was once very rich for them. I think that's important. And I think in some cases the objects that belong to that world were precious to them. I think Magnusson's point is that they aren't going to have the same meaning going forward, and you can't expect them to. So your gift to people is to sort them out before you leave because, in fact, you're only leaving a problem for them. You're not leaving a gift.

L: On that note then, let's talk about your mom's death cleaning, if you're comfortable.

C: Yeah! For sure.

L: How did you feel going through all of your mom's things? Can you describe the experience?

C: Well it fascinates me because I had the chance to do it with my grandmother too when she died. She had grown up very poor. I mean, she had grown up in the depression. She was single, and raised her children on her own without a lot of money. So she didn't have anything that you'd call fine, beautiful stuff to leave behind. But she had all her kitchen bowls, and she's a great cook, and she had her gardening stuff. And these objects were representative of the experiences she gave me, like my love for baking and my love of gardening. And those were things that had nothing to do really with the objects, the objects just kind of remind me. I have nothing really from my grandmother, but I have a whole rich understanding of what was important from her point of view, and I share that.

L: Did you mom end up having a similar sort of life? Did you grow up in a home full of objects?

C: Oh, we moved a lot so I actually never lived in the house that I helped my mom move from. So I don't have any significant attachment to that home. The only place that ever stayed the same to us was a cottage that my grandfather built, and my father added to it a bit. It's nothing of significance, it's truly a little old wooden cottage, but it gave us lots of memories. It gave us summers that were simple and easy and fun, and it continues that way. I remember that it was a huge effort for my grandfather to buy the land, and then he built the cottage himself, and so it has a lot of meaning in that way. But my mom, I mean there wasn't anything in particular that I wanted. It's not that her things weren't lovely--they were lovely--but you know, you build a life. You look after what you need for yourself mostly. The only thing, I remember wanting is from when my father died--he died quite early--and the only thing that I have of my father's is a curling sweater that my mother knit for him. When I got it, it was pretty weird, and I don't know that anybody would have thought it worth anything, but now it's weirdly fashionable. My kids wear it! And it seems kind of ludicrous that it's the only thing I have of his.

L: Did your mom downsize after your father had died?

C: Nope. She stayed in the same big house, and I think she stayed because she felt that was where he was in a weird way. At least her memories of him were strongest there and so it was meaningful to her; she just moved out of that house a couple months ago, so she's been there a long time (she's lived thirty years and counting after his death). But I don't think she had any remorse about moving out, or moving on. I think she felt she'd lived a good life there and it was a good moment to change that life. She moved to a one bedroom apartment that is really nice too.

L: This reminds me of a story about Paul and his father, who passed away three years ago. He was an avid reader and had hundreds of books. When he died, Paul's mom had to get the books out of the house--she needed for them to not be

there. She also sold her house, downsized and moved into an apartment. Paul says packing up the books, watching the books being donated to Value Village or wherever, these books that he had curated his entire life--that that was more painful than the moment of being in the hospital and hearing the news. Does that strike a chord with you?

C: Yeah, books are a very peculiar thing. Books and art I think are odd. I had a good sort of a lesson, in that our house burnt up about five years ago, and I had over five-thousand books at that point.

L: Oh god!

C: And I wasn't aware that I had that many books--I had a lot of bookshelves--but when the insurance people said "how many books do you think you had?," I said, "maybe five, six-hundred," and they had to catalogue them all one by one because of the damage report, and it was over five-thousand. And that astounded me. Most of them were damaged by smoke, although some were burnt up--they said it was too expensive to restore them. And I had this awful moment of "oh my god my books! My books are all going to go!" And it was clear, there was no other option. So I said fine okay, so they would reimburse me for them, so that was fine. It turned out to be sort of okay, it was a significant amount of money that I could put into drywall and whatever, restoring the house. And I put it out of my head, and then a year and a half after the fire they came back and they said "look, it's going to cost us money to destroy your books. They've been sitting in cold storage all this time, do you want to come out and take a look at them? Cause if you want any of them back you can have them back. You can still have the money for them, but you can have them back." So I went out to the storage and most of them were fine, because they'd sat out in the freezing cold for a couple of winters, which does remarkably good things to getting rid of the smoke smell. And I found it really hard not to take them back, but I had built back a house that had no bookshelves. I had already decided I'll go to the library, that I wouldn't accumulate books--something I really haven't managed to follow--so I took back about four-thousand of the five-thousand books, and I dispersed them to friends and family. I kept a handful, I kept about three-hundred, that was all I kept. But I started to go through them, and I could not...I couldn't in some cases believe I'd ever wanted to read that book; specifically pertaining to things like semiotics, and some of the stuff I'd kept--and I thought, why am I keeping this? This makes no sense, it makes more sense to pass it along. Books are not easy to get rid of because there's a cost to keeping them, but I completely identify with this sort of awful feeling of not having your books. They felt like somebody taking away your favourite sneakers or sweater or something like that. They were part of an identity that I formed until I looked hard at them and thought, I don't think this is necessary anymore, and that was an extremely good experience for me. But in Paul's case, those books probably represented his dad, and that's a little different.

L: Is there any item like that, you think represents your mom?

C: Nope.

L: Like wedding rings or other jewellery, perhaps?

C: Yeah, nope. None of that. No, I don't think there's anything now.

L: Clothing?

C: No.

L: Hair combs?

C: No.

L: But you love hair combs!

C: I do but my mother doesn't have any. So, no I don't think there's anything.

L: Did you feel like you learned a lot about your mom helping her clean out her home?

C: I would say that I learned more when we had the fire in our house because I learned at that point, that the things you really are attached to—photographs, for example—those are the things that are truly important. It's not the clothes, the sports equipment, the furniture, the china--china is remarkably tough, it survives fires--but it's none of those things. It's photographs, and, luckily, my mother had already given me all of that because she doesn't want the burden of looking after it herself. And I don't know what the heck I'm going to do with it exactly. But yeah, that's important to me, but I already have that.

L: Has the experience of death cleaning with your mom and grandmother inspire your own aspirations for death cleaning? Do you think you'll do the same with your children?

C: I hope so. I hope so. I have one kid who's a pack rat, and I don't want to abet her.

L: [Laughter]

C: But she doesn't really have a lot of storage space so I'm keeping some of her stuff and that drives me crazy. While I appreciate that she'd like some of my stuff, I just don't want to store and keep it. But we haven't figured out the answer to that thing yet. I'm fine that other people want stuff, it's just I don't. I really don't want the burden of caring for things. Because I do think that's the other thing you learn, it's if you have something that is beautiful--if you have silver you have to clean it and so--you better love that piece, because you're going to spend time looking after it. It's just like having a pet, weirdly. If you're going to have a pet, you're going to have to invest time in looking after it.

L: Is there any one item that you'd be devastated if...

C: I lost?

L: ...your kids just didn't want it and it just ended up on the street on the curb?

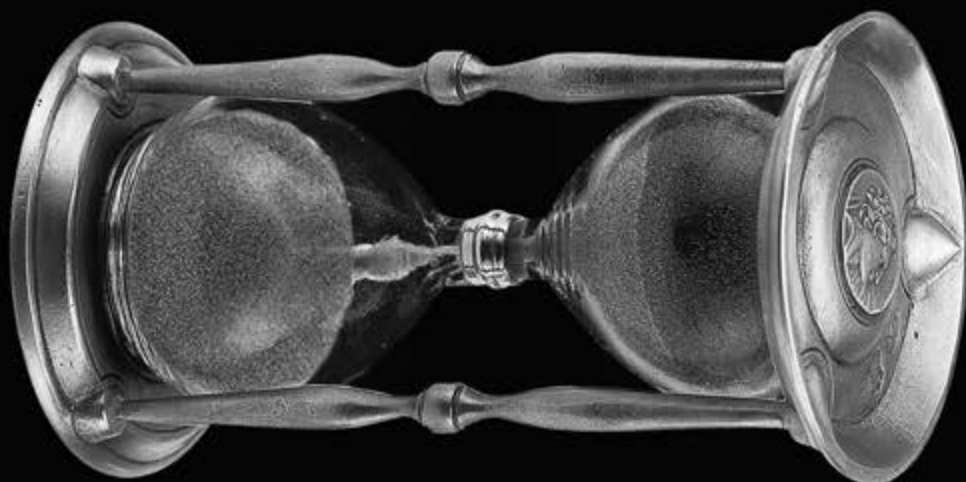
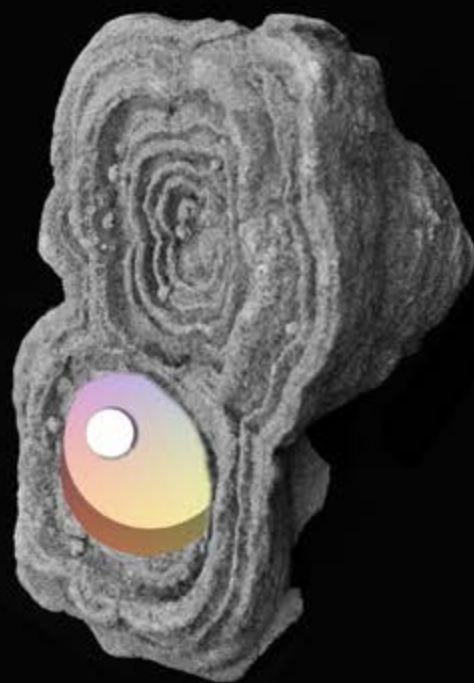
C: Not an object per se. I'd be surprised and disturbed--although again not my decision in a way--if they didn't want to continue looking after the cottage and having that as a place they love. But objects, not so much. Art, I have art I really like, but if my kids don't want it I know lots of people who do. And I'm happy to give it to somebody who wants it, so I do think that getting stuff into the hands of people who love it is fine; that's a good thing to do. It's like wearing old clothes, hand-me-downs. I always like that, because you get a sense of the person that gave it to you and if you like it, you like it. There's a kind of karma that goes with those things that I really like.

L: I think we did it, do you have any last points?

C: Yeah, I mean it sounds really trite, but I don't think death is as frightening as not living a life. That, to me, is really frightening. And I think part of the responsibility in living a life is to deal with your stuff! Y'know, what you accumulate, what you do...so it just seems to me, part of...

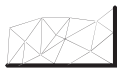
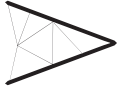
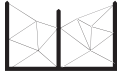
L: Life?

C: Yeah!





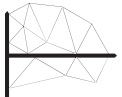
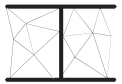
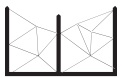
by CCC



There's a video online of three ostriches (*les autruche*) standing in a cage. It's a grainy black and white surveillance video, shot from the back corner of the cage, over the shoulders of the ostriches. They're standing there, in V formation, gently swaying back and forth as though they are branches touched by a light breeze. Above each of their heads are the letters S-W-S. Slow Wave Sleep.



Slow wave sleep is considered the deepest form of sleep, and is widely thought to be used for memory consolidation: the process where the brain cherrypicks from the day's selection of short term memories and backs them up to its internal hard drive - long term memory. In this state, the birds aren't dreaming. Their brains, like ours, can't do two things at once. They're just recovering from the day - collating data - sorting it, filing it for future reference, or discarding it. Gradually, the letters above each of their heads change from S-W-S to R-E-M - Rapid Eye Movement sleep. As the letters change, their long necks start flopping, almost violently, from side to side, and the feathers on their wings start to bristle and shake. (*leurs cerveaux se sont reveilles*)



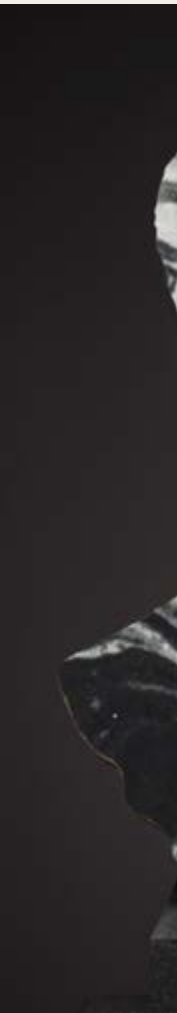
The backup storage process is complete. The little pinwheel in their heads has finished spinning and their brains are off to the races again dreaming of food, or fighting, or romance - or of delicately tiptoeing around in the soft grass with their huge clawed feet. But there's a paradox in this sleep equation. It's a zombie state.

When Lady Macbeth arises from her slumber in Act V, she throws on her housecoat and lumbers over to her desk to scribble some notes on a piece of paper - her brain turned off. Slow Wave Sleep. Her mind is backing up memories - pinwheel spinning - the screen is frozen, as she slowly, carefully, folds up her piece of paper and slips it into an envelope. Her body moving through space, unhinged to conscious thought. "All is a doubling... in your absence is your presence," says Anne Michaels. *(même en ta présence il y a ton absence)*

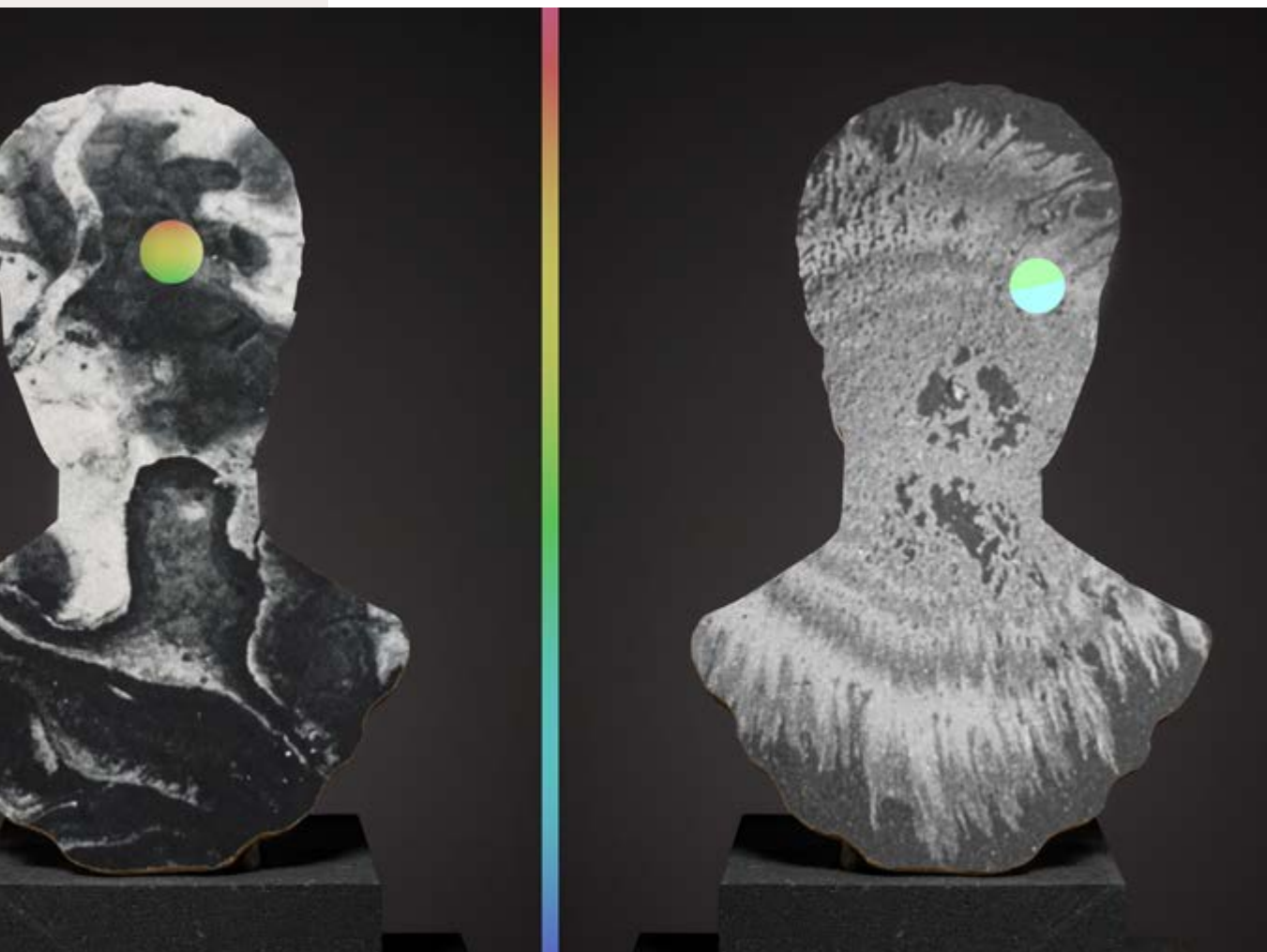
Sleepwalkers have no memory of their exploits, although their eyes are open, their expression is a dim gaze of dilated pupils. A sleepwalking state is also, curiously, not a dreaming state. They are zombies, brainless bodies navigating themselves through the physical world unaware of their actions and labours.

In 1978 the director Philip Kaufman released a film titled Invasion of the Body Snatchers, a remake of a 1950's cult classic. In the film, alien plant spores have fallen to earth and grown into large seed pods. Each pod is capable of reproducing a duplicate copy of a human body. The physical characteristics are identical but the replicas are devoid of conscious thought. They're not themselves. Their bodies belong to another world. *(Leurs corps appartiennent à un autre monde)*

Looking at the ostriches gently swaying back and forth in their cage with the letters S-W-S above their heads, I think about the other lives our



bodies live. The one without a mind, where we write notes, or casually sway, or rest in the ground - or walk around a room seemingly quite content, with a dull smile and a foggy stare. Our lives outside of the life that we call ourselves. The life that commandeers our body when our head is turned off or rebooting. (*le nous que nous sommes sans nos têtes*)



"THE
STORYTELLER
BORROWS
HIS
AUTHORITY
FROM
DEATH"

by ERIC BECK RUBIN

When I first heard it, English 201 'Poetry', I didn't know where to begin. The professor explained it to me this way: You know the Volvo ad where a woman is driving through the desert with a child in the back? The subtext of the ad is that Volvo will get you and the child through the desert, Volvo won't let you die. These days Volvo's big ad (it's called 'Moments') plays out the story of a child's life - first day of school, birthday, travel (through a desert), love, marriage - before showing that it could all be over before it begins if the child is hit by a car driven by a person who has spilled coffee on herself and isn't paying attention. Fortunately for the child (and the driver) that car is a Volvo, and it stops automatically. That great, old story - Volvo ex machina. Like something a novelist would write, or a playwright, or poet.

The major shock of writing - for me, at least, and I'm ashamed to say it - was in seeing the power of words. You write 'it's raining' and rain begins to fall around the reader. The same with 'she smiled' - a sympathetic reaction is likely. 'Less is more' is founded on the fact that individual words make enormous waves. No word makes a bigger wave than *death*. I try not to use it. When it came time for the protagonist of my novel to end, I made it possible he didn't.

As much as the storyteller borrows authority from death, there comes a time when the piper has to be repaid. Protagonist, kaput. Their friend, too. Then comes the last chapter, paragraph, sentence, word, letter - for your book, it's time to die. Your job, at that point - and at every point before, though you may not have realised it - is to resist death. The problem is that death's the horse you've ridden to this point. Or car you've driven. Do you think you can just conjure another mode of transportation out of thin air? A story that borrows its authority from life? Or is that impossible, like jumping from one speeding vehicle to another? Now 'The Storyteller borrows his authority from death' seems less like a special pass, and more like a warning, a trap.

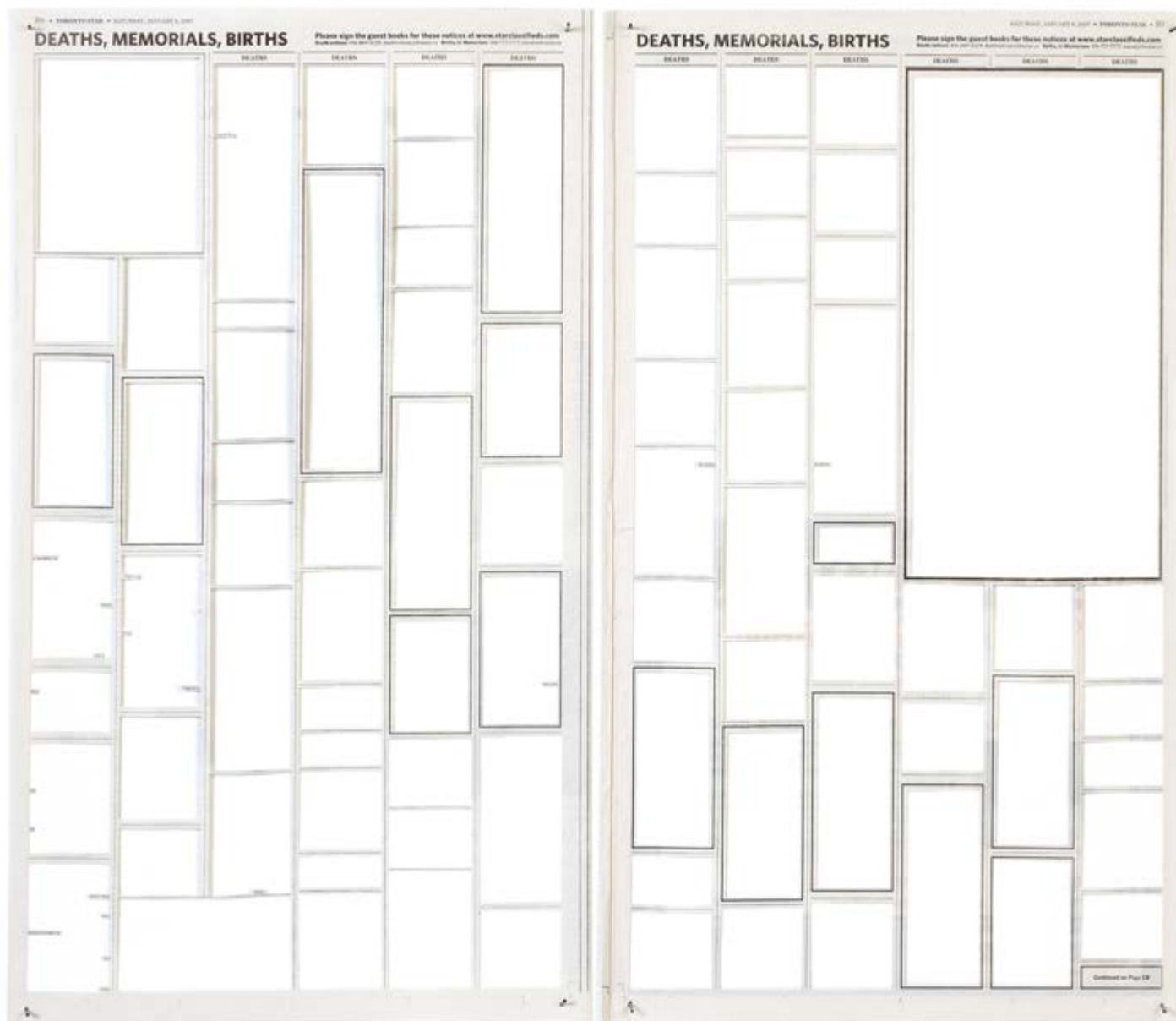
DEATHS /

MEMORIALS /

BIRTHS

by ERIKA DEFREITAS

I collected the obituary section from the *Toronto Star*, as they were read by me starting in November 2006. I kept track of words that resonated with me each day by writing them down and noting what column and row they were located on. Once I completed this daily process, I would work with the selected words to create a metaphorical narrative that was representative of a memory that had been created. I cut out the selected words, as well as all of the death notices - leaving behind the borders that framed them and the lines that separated them. Once this stage was completed, I taped the selected words back into the column and row where they were originally located. The final product of this action was digitally photographed as a means of questioning authorship, absence, and the limits of time. There are 50 photographs in this series.



Erika DeFreitas, *Deaths/Memorials/Births* (Saturday, January 6, 2007). Inkjet print on Kozuke Paper, 2006-2007/2013.

C R E S C E N T

There are several undead theories surrounding the moon. The celestial form, loaded with scientific meaning and superstition across historical accounts, bears a lyrical heft that is perhaps best experienced in the format of the poem.

"The moon is my mother./ She is not sweet like Mary," Sylvia Plath personifies the creamy, distant, nightly vision in "The Moon and the Yew Tree," part of her collection of poems Ariel. The moon here is actively unromantic, and made perverse with the mother's loss of husband; it is accompanied by the death metaphor of the yew tree in Celtic myth.

One can disengage the moon from Plath's expression of paternal absentia, and find it luminous, an object of enviable comparison, in late 18th and early 19th century Urdu and Farsi-language poet Mirza Ghalib's "Unke Dekhe Se Jo Aa Jati (On Seeing Them, My face...)." In his opening line, Ghalib observes a lover: "Husn-e-mah, garche ba hangaam-e-kamaal achcha hai usse mera mah-e-khursheed-e-jamaal achcha hai," which, according to the blog "Bad Moon Rising," translates to, "though the beauty of the moon in the time of perfectness is good, my moon with sun's beauty is even better than that."

The moon, the ultimate paragon of allure, is put to shame by a beloved's aura, by the poet's personal "moon with sun's beauty." The metaphor is embraced coyly—the "lesser moon" (real, large) must exist in order to illuminate the personified one (the beloved). The moon, in a sense, births the beloved who—despite her beauty—will, at one time or another, die.

The moon's marriage with the dying has been arranged speculatively, in tremulous untruths. A floating belief that is both void of exact historic context and relishes in its

NOTES

by AADITYA AGGARWAL

mythic vagueness is that of the moon's hold over human affairs: the imagined ability to alter events of the living, their bodily impulses, and insignificant traumas.

It is likely in Assyrian and Babylonian writings that the moon is first sighted as a potent indicator of vitality and demise. Following ancient Babylonian accounts that hypothesized and catalogued the lunar cycle, the period from 652 BC to AD 130 saw the Chaldeans (neo-Babylonians) regularly observe astronomical patterns and record their findings on clay tablets. At the time, a victory in battle following a night of the full moon, ascribed the galactic presence with qualities of the good omen. Conversely, if the new moon emerged in the sky earlier than expected, the event was known to foreshadow upcoming defeat, unrest and death of cattle.

The 27.3 days that form the average lunar cycle also has historical ties in oral histories of the menstruation cycle, surgical death, fertility and destruction. In matters of death, the moon could be said to assume the role of a small god, surrounded by anecdotes of the undead; it witnesses death, possibly causes it, but never departs in permanence.

There remains, however, a soft refusal, even among believers and researchers, to truly have faith in the moon's rumoured relationship to the dying. In a rather specific and thorough 2004 study by the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau in Barcelona, titled "The influence of the full moon on the number of admissions related to gastrointestinal bleeding," the Department of Gastroenterology staff conclude their report with bleak findings. While there is an increase in the number of hospital admissions during the full moon, "further studies" are required to confirm "the possible influence of the moon" on the medical condition. The "influence of the moon" is striking terminology; while the team employs the term to contextualize the moon as a scientific variable in

conjunction to patterns of medical death, its use also evokes a language of inebriation. The moon could be said to consume dying subjects “under its influence,” were its influence a real, legitimate thing. The lack of control and befuddled sense of clarity hints at an untrue, mythic, yet uncanny, power that the moon presents in certain contexts of medicine—an industry fixated, often violently, monetarily, on death, disposal and revival.

The question of the moon’s impact on the living and the dead feels best answered when the subject itself is thought of as undead. In Nourbese Philip’s experimental book of poetry *Zong!*—drawing its title from the massacre of 442 African slaves on a ship called *Zong* traveling from West Africa to Jamaica in the month of November, 1781—the undead being takes root in forced transatlantic migration. Here, the undead performs a tongue-turning, languorous speech; a verse tightly placed in the scattered, mobile structure of “On Mothers and Strangers” reads: “absencelosttears laughter grief/ in any language.” The text, intentionally dismembered and conjoined, is centred in form, yet appears sprawling, each line thinning with ends like fingertips. The verse seems to want to hold beyond the page.

The moon is not an observer of language, but a witness to the words of the dying, presently. Perhaps, here, the moon is possible.

In Pakistani Urdu-Language poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz’s poem “Bangladesh II,” (translated by Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali) the moon, caught in the onslaught of the 1971 Bangladesh genocide by the Pakistani military, is “erupted with blood, its silver extinguished.” A worn, bleeding moon has survived; it is undead; not being observed but rather observing the “spectral,” the departing, the residue and debris.

A dotted blue sky or a full moon's night is imbued with an insistent remembrance. The memory of violence that keeps returning, never leaves, preserves viscera. "The bones of the undead," Philip claims, "can find a resting place within us."

Although the range of the moon's influence is unknown and unconfirmed, even skeptical scientific reportage exhibits a defensiveness that borders on doubtful, uncertain, the sense of being sure but not yet. The moon begins to occupy a field of the undead, both as theory and image.

It inhabits, from a bird's eye view, the moments prior to one's departure. Inuit Scottish-Canadian spoken word performer and writer Taqralik Partridge crafts the spectre of the particular breed of "undead" in her story "Igloodik," which begins with a memory of departure. On a cold porch, the unnamed narrator is talking to her friend Alacie, arguing with her about how her and her boyfriend parted ways. "But he's not dead," the narrator insists, referring to her boyfriend. Alacie responds, "It doesn't matter, it's the same thing." Alacie repeats her mother's words to her friend: "When people are going to leave this world, they get really beautiful."

I imagine in this scene a waning crescent licking itself, then shrinking supplely into its last quarter. It is night time. It doesn't matter; an absence is not a death.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Aaditya Aggarwal is the programming coordinator at Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival. He was the 2016 Online Editorial Intern at Canadian Art and the Sid Adilman Mentee at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival and Screen Daily, an industry news publication. Aaditya has also contributed writing to online publications like The New Inquiry, The Review and The Ethnic Aisle.

CCC is a collaborative project founded by Angela Shackel and Braden Labonte in 2013. The project operates as a shifting collection of artists, writers, performers and audio producers. The collective likes to be described as a hodgepodge of curious individuals, who work together to create temporary installations and uncanny experiences, that exist in the world for a few moments - until they don't anymore. Recent installations include Narrative Structure part of the Bonavista Biennale (Bonavista, NFLD), The Sublime in Quotations at YYZ (Toronto, On), Hold On Hold On Some Things Last Forever at Katzman Contemporary (Toronto, On) and at Forest City Gallery (London, On). Recent audio pieces include an adaptation of Anne Carson's Antigone for McSweeney's podcast, The Organist, which airs on KCRW.

Nicole Collins has exhibited extensively since 1994, including solo exhibitions at The University of Waterloo Art Gallery (2013), The Art Gallery of Ontario (2013) and The Embassy of Canada in Tokyo (2001) and group exhibitions in Toronto, Hamilton, St. Johns, New York, Miami, London and Zurich. Her work has been featured online and in magazines, newspapers and books including the major survey Abstract Painting in Canada (Roald Nasgaard), the 3rd edition of A Concise History of Canadian Painting (Dennis Reid), Carte Blanche, Volume 2: Painting, and The Donovan Collection Catalogue. Collins is an Assistant Professor in the Drawing & Painting program at the Ontario College of Art & Design University (OCADU) and she lives in Toronto with her husband artist Michael Davidson and their daughter. Collins' work is represented by General Hardware Contemporary in Toronto.

Letticia Cosbert is a Toronto-based writer, editor, and content producer. She is currently the Digital Content Coordinator at the Koffler Centre of the Arts, where she works with new media artists exploring the intersection of art and social justice. Letticia studied Classics, earning a B.A. from the University of Toronto, and an M.A. from Western University, where she specialized in erotic Latin poetry. Her writing and editorial work has been featured in Ephemera Magazine, Sophomore Magazine, The Ethnic Aisle, and publications by Katzman Contemporary, Younger Than Beyonce Gallery, Xpace, and Trinity Square Video.

Erika DeFreitas is a Scarborough-based multidisciplinary conceptual artist. She explores the influence of language, loss and culture on the formation of identity with textile-based works, and performative actions that are photographed; placing an emphasis on process, gesture and documentation. DeFreitas is a recipient of the 2016 Finalist Artist Prize from the Toronto Friends of Visual Arts, the 2016 John Hartman Award, and was long listed for the 2017 Sobey Art Award (Ontario). She is a graduate of the Masters of Visual Studies Program at the University of Toronto. Exhibition sites have included Project Row Houses in Houston, Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art in Newark, New Jersey, the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, Art Souterrain festival in Montreal, The Art Gallery of Windsor, Platform Centre for Photographic & Digital Arts, Centre [3] for Print and Media Arts, Gallery 44, The Art Gallery of Mississauga, the Pollock Gallery at the Southern Methodist University in Dallas, and the Houston Museum of African American Culture.

Mona Filip is the Director/Curator of the Koffler Gallery at the Koffler Centre of the Arts, Toronto. From 2009 to 2013, she developed the Gallery's Off-Site exhibition program - a series of site-specific projects presented across the city. Working with artists that mine the contemporary urban environment, its memory and multilayered histories to fuel dialogue on

social issues, the Off-Site program explored the city as material and subject to be constantly created by and transformed through the interaction of art and audiences. Originally from Bucharest, Romania, Filip received her BFA from the Corcoran School of Art, Washington DC, and her MFA from SUNY at Buffalo. She has served on many granting and public art juries, as well as on the Board of Directors of Mercer Union in Toronto.

C. Jonasson is the Executive Director of the Koffler Centre of the Arts.

Anya Moryoussef is an architect and educator who has published several literary non-fiction essays on the nature and paradoxes of artifice. She runs a design practice in Toronto and teaches studio at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture.

Dainesha Nugent-Palache is a Toronto based artist, writer, curator, and recent graduate of OCAD University—working primarily in photography, and video, often employing the use of performativity—Her practice is centred around themes of otherness, identity and representation, in relation to both femininity and the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. Through the use of satire, pastiche and colour, Dainesha’s work is aesthetically tantalizing enough to pull viewers in, so that they may then consider the deeper layered complexities which exist within her work. All in all, it is Dainesha’s intent to provide documentation and commentary on twenty-first-century realities through visual narratives, for the sake of posterity.

Patricia Ritacca is a Toronto-based curator and arts professional. Patricia holds an MA in Contemporary Art History & Theory from the University of Toronto, and is the Public Engagement Coordinator at the Koffler Gallery and a social practice curator with the collective Aisle 4. Curatorial projects include: *On the Table*, a series of politically-engaged artist multiples for the Toronto Design Offsite Festival (2017), *Gallery Galleria*, a public exhibition of site-specific performances and installations in Toronto’s Galleria Shopping Centre (2016), and co-curation of the Art of the Danforth Festival (2014). She has curated exhibitions for OCADU, and has assisted in the curation and programming of exhibitions for the City of Toronto and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Eric Beck Rubin is a cultural historian who writes on architecture, literature, and psychology. *School of Velocity* is his first novel and he is currently at work on a second: a family saga spanning pre-World War II Germany to present-day Los Angeles and Western Canada.

Image credits

Inside front cover: CCC, *Death Only Looks Like Sleep in Pictures*, 2018. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Page 6: CCC, *About Monuments*, 2018. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Page 13: Leonardo Da Vinci Academy of Arts & Sciences, Grade 8 Guidance Assignment, March 1996.

Page 14: "How to conquer your fear of heights," by John Rau. Dow Jones & Co. Inc., March 1996.

Pages 17-18: Grade 8 Guidance Assignment, by Patricia Ritacca, March 1996.

Page 27: CCC, *A Still Life Belongs to Time*, 2018. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Page 30: CCC, *A Spurious Imposter*, 2018. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Pages 34-37: Erika DeFreitas, *Deaths/Memorials/Births*. Inkjet print on Kozuke Paper, 2006-2007/2013.



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