

# OREAD



**AN INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE  
OF LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION**

**Summer 2021**



# **OREAD**

**A MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE  
IN TRANSLATION**

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# Contents

Denise Desautels	
~ Translated by Alisa Belanger	
Motif's/Motives (excerpt)	7
Joanne Morency	
~ Translated by Jill Varley	
Raccourci jusqu'au plus simple	18
Only What is Needed	19
Le temps qui tombe	20
Change in the Weather	21
Bonhomme sept heures	22
The Bogeyman	23
Marées	24
Tides	25
Dérive	26
Adrift	27
Peau d'âne	28
Donkey Skin	29
Dans la marge	30
In the Margins	31
Fragile	32
Fragile	33
Larry Tremblay	
~ Translated by Donald Winkler	
The Left Eye (excerpt)	34
André Major	
~ Translated by Jean-Paul Murray	
The Devil's Wind (excerpt)	51
Contributors	63



Denise Desautels

*Translation by Alisa Belanger*

*from Lessons from Venice*

**Motifs/Motives (excerpt)**

**13.**

Masked, then unmasked, the beds, the chairs, the tables...

Autobiography masked by the work of form and by the sudden interest granted to its unfurling in space, because of the array of materials, textures, and colors.

Materials. I see them, feel them, touch them. Yet I remember only an unmade bed, stacked, piled chairs, a drafting table whose latticework obscures the gaze. I retain only the very connotative objects—although deformed and divested of their chief functions—which have a name and a “material culture.” For me there will only ever be ambiguous words and stories with often unexplained origins that weave among them.

I cannot forget that there is a bed, chairs, a table, guns, more cumbersome than the fruit bowls in a painting by Cézanne.

## 14.

Autobiography, unspoken memory, perilous.

I allow it slowly to rise in me before heading toward the right form which will separate it from me and which, perhaps one day, will draw in someone else in search of resemblance and uneasiness.

So that nothing escapes at the horizon, I seek out a voice that will delve into the heart of things and their potential, and that will reemerge fragile, uncertain, like a suggestion among so many others.

## 15.

Charles Guilbert writes: “Perhaps because of this bed, so empty, poised between calm and drought.”

In a ristorante at Ca’ d’Oro, a woman sat down in front of me. I’m moved by her large, black, troubled eyes, by her eyes riveted on mine where the words that carry passions are still parading. She speaks, she recounts the incident, and recites the text known by heart: “... that bed, so empty,” that bed that, all at once, holds onto her and rejects her. She lays it before her or before me like an all too familiar object set askance to see it better.

A bed. Then, there persist only sounds, an unfinished meaning that personally belongs to no one in this ristorante.

And, on that bed, not a single sheet to acknowledge the bodies’ need for tenderness.

## 16.

A bed. Merely a surface that holds neither the body nor its imprint. Nothing other than a form most often unfit for habitation. What remains when it's stripped? A sketch? Some murmurs? The sign of a passage? The repetition of an abandonment?

The sculptor piled up chairs that face us and that we observe; he set them against a wall inside the posts of a bed. Gestures without innocence? The excessive repetition of an abandonment? A construct of silence?

17.

I pronounce the word bed out loud and recognize the sounds. Meticulously, I retrace the trajectory that beckons me from desire to dreams, then from love to the fragility of love.

I pass from a bed, meaning an obvious form, tactile, that surprises and disconcerts at first glance in this pavilion, to what it supposes about childhood, tender experiences, turmoil, confessions, and abandonments.

I say *letto* in the language of Venice to evoke, differently than *lit*, than *bed*, the place of retreat, respite, anticipation, passion, and its end, perhaps.

I say *letto* in the language of Venice. I am thus in the process of attempting to read the world, to interpret it, to say fervor and renunciation by saying something else.

## 18.

The first time that I slept alone, I was no longer a child. I didn't know how others sleep alone. I felt suddenly transparent, so fluid that I could flow out of bed without realizing it. I couldn't do without a body to shelter me. I needed to be held, attached to the bedposts. I was the "woman in chains." A hand, an arm, a body to keep me alive throughout the night.

The first time that I slept alone, the bed was empty.

## 19.

In a ristorante of Ca' d'Oro, we're facing each other, hope against hope, and our names are interchangeable. Something unites us: the tie, which we make despite ourselves, between life and drifting, and the fact of not fleeing, not lying. The bed is there, so mobile all of a sudden, without anything in it that hinders the movement from life to death. Akin, we speak of the obvious risk of sadness and our often tragic bodies "suspended between serenity and drought." We tell each other love stories that are always true and stories of ruin. We have a common passion for all that resists erosion, though we don't deny it.

Then silence covers us. We slip imperceptibly from motifs to motives, eyes turned toward the inside.

Living flesh on the bedposts of dreams.

## 20.

Everything is sometimes insignificant. Everything might be scattered between infinity and concentrated force. Later, on the drafting table, there remain only islets of memories like rapidly exhausted events, finally isolated. We feel it each time beforehand: the overly vast space confuses emotions, and the object withdraws before we consent to its distancing.

We must imagine its gardens where the gaze lingers, then softly disperses and, fragment by fragment, we must distinguish the sculptor's project like a slow-motion story.

## 21.

It's the last act and the last scene. There are two characters, one woman and one man, in a bedroom with a beachfront view. To the left, the latticework of a drafting table through which the light doesn't filter; at right, a bed empties or fills with an impossible memory, as the man and the woman dream of a strange habit that salvages what is essential. Under their eyes, the bed comes undone at a touch and cedes its place to the numerous chairs, obsessed by memories. It's the darkest night, infinitely prolonged. Their bodies hesitate, then the characters clutch onto each other or tear each other apart, trapeze artists perched atop the pile. He looks at her differently, and it no longer suffices. Perhaps they will talk about Venice, about the burst of roses. Perhaps they will imagine bedrooms and gardens where the figures of desire won't escape; he will say: the chairs are inviting to the touch; he will add: maps and volumes, a scaffold of snakes and ladders, an irresistible sculpture, inhabited by the strength of anticipation and secrecy...

## 22.

Bending over the drafting table that he consults like a map of the world, the man evokes for her the child with the exacting gaze that moves her. He says that he saw her walking Piazza San Marco, pushed ahead by a recent joy. She was telling him about Venice and reinventing its history based on what she had seen. Perhaps someone had moved before her, or she imagined that a person had moved, or she later incited that movement because she had so ardently desired it.

## 23.

The sea rises on a stage stripped of its artfulness. Sometimes an unforeseen audacity imposes its own necessity. The essential appears in the methodical gestures that slow the movement of the world and that refuse neither silence nor distraction. At the point where the gaze of the sculptor carves out his part of the air and sky, the body lightly trembles, the body is a question. Everything murmurs. Words wander like pigeons, without certainty, above abandoned objects. Sometimes, in freefall, words come tenderly to butt against objects, then once again take flight.

Venice may disappear.

Joanne Morency  
*Translation by Jill Varley*

*from A Thousand Pieces*

## Raccourci jusqu'au plus simple

Les feuilles de thé bougent dans ma tasse. Mes lunettes me privent du flou.

Je choisis d'enjamber les détails. De n'entrevoir que la courbe des choses...

Ne voler au secours de rien.  
Me défaire de tout argument.

Couper les phrases en deux.

Écrire le monde.  
Tel quel.

## Only What is Needed

Tea leaves drift in my cup. My glasses force them into focus.

I would prefer to gloss over the details, to glimpse only the curve of things...

Nothing to be rescued, or untangled from all argument.

I cut the sentences in two.

I write the world.  
As it is.

## Le temps qui tombe

Aujourd'hui je neige. Sans effort. Sans bousculade.

Je tombe, lentement. Me suspens. Me pose à peine. Comme une caresse, prête à fondre.

Je ralentis. M'accumule patiemment, avec minutie, sans souci de l'endroit. Flocon par flocon. Sur des kilomètres à la ronde.

Je m'amoncelle au sol. Jusqu'à reprendre consistance. Calmement rayonnante, je me roule en boule.

## Change in the Weather

I am snowing today, without effort, without argument.

I am falling, slowly, suspended. Hardly touching down, like a caress ready to melt.

I slow up and accumulate patiently, precisely, in any old place. Flake by flake, covering kilometers.

I gather on the ground until I regain form. Calm and radiant, I roll into a snowball.

## Bonhomme sept heures

Elle entre par la porte de derrière, la peur.

Je ne la vois jamais arriver.

Une fillette joue tranquillement à la poupée quand, tout à coup, elle crie au loup. Se réfugie dans un recoin de mon thorax en tremblant.

Un rien l'alarme. Elle court partout. Vire parfois l'intérieur sens dessus dessous.

J'allume des lampes, aligne des paroles rassurantes sur le manteau de la cheminée.

Le plancher craque toujours sous l'enfance.

Je lâche les chiens. Nul ne jappe. Rien qui rôde dans les environs. Rien qui puisse m'avalier.

Je m'invente un jeu de dangers et j'oublie que j'y joue.

# The Bogeyman

Fear finds its way in through the backdoor.

I never see it coming.

A little girl is playing quietly with her doll when, suddenly, she cries wolf, and hides herself away, trembling, in a cranny of my chest.

Anything can alarm her. She runs in circles, sometimes turning the inside upside down.

I turn on the lights, line up words of reassurance on the mantelpiece.

The floor always cracks beneath the weight of childhood.

I release the dogs. None bark. Nothing lurks in the surroundings, nothing that can swallow me.

I invent a game of danger and then forget that I am playing.

## Marées

Tout se tient sans effort.

La lune tourne autour de la terre, évitant de trop s'en éloigner.

Les marées n'oublient jamais de rentrer.

Je n'ai pas à toujours m'en préoccuper, ni à retenir chaque bras à son épaule, à classer chaque pensée au fur et à mesure.

Rien ne s'échappera.

D'ailleurs, le chat revient toujours.

## Tides

Everything holds together without trying.

The moon turns around the earth, careful not to wander off.

The tides never forget to come back in.

There's no need for me to always worry, holding back each arm at the shoulder or filing away each thought as it occurs.

Nothing will be lost.

Even the cat never fails to come home.

## Dérive

Je ne m'aperçois de rien.

Les plantes vertes ont poussé.

Les tournesols sont éclos.

Le minou est devenu matou.

Une ride s'est installée au coin d'une lèvre.

Je n'ai rien vu venir. Comme si je n'y étais pas. Ou si peu. Je ne suis presque jamais là. Ou pas vraiment. Je m'absente plusieurs fois par jour. Plus qu'à mon tour. J'oublie d'y être. Je perds des bribes, des pans tout entiers de ce qui se passe dans l'entourage immédiat, juste au bord de moi.

Il y a tant de petits bouts de jour escamotés. Lus en diagonale.

Et l'on tourne la page...

## Adrift

I notice nothing.

The green plants have grown.

The sunflowers have bloomed.

The kitten has become a tomcat.

A wrinkle has moved into the corner of a lip.

I just did not see it coming. As if I were not here, or so rarely. I almost never am, or not entirely. I leave myself behind many times a day, and more often than I should. I forget to show up. I lose fragments, then entire swaths, of what is happening in my circle, right beside me.

So many ends of days passed over. Read in diagonal.

And a new chapter begins...

## Peau d'âne

J'habite un corps. Il me recouvre tant bien que mal. Je n'y pense pas continuellement. Mais je sens qu'il est là.

Il se rappelle à moi à brûle-pourpoint, criant tout haut ce que je voudrais taire. Il a des crampes là où j'hésite. Se brise contre mes peurs. Pleure sous la peau.

Je le cogne souvent contre un cadre de porte ou un coin de bureau. Je ne sais pas très bien où il finit... où je commence.

Il échappe tantôt un verre ou une assiette. Il échappe un peu de moi à l'occasion, entre deux phrases précipitées. Des miettes de moi entre les coussins du canapé.

Je me demande comment être gentille avec lui. Comment l'empêcher de tout prendre en note et de peser si lourd d'archives inutiles ?

J'aimerais l'aimer, même s'il fait mal. L'empêcher de s'en aller.

Je ne sais plus si c'est lui qui me porte ou moi qui le tiens droit.

## Donkey Skin

I live within a body. It covers me, more or less. I do not think about it constantly, but I feel that it is there.

It sends reminders at close range, screaming out loud what I would rather keep hidden. It has cramps in places where I hesitate. It breaks against my fears, crying under the skin.

I often drive it into a door frame or the corner of a desk. I don't really know where it ends...or where I begin.

Occasionally, it drops a glass or a plate. It drops parts of me from time to time, between two hurried sentences. Pieces of me scattered between the cushions of the couch.

I wonder how I might be kinder to it. Could I stop it from noting everything down and taking on the weight of useless archives?

I would like to be able to love it, even when it hurts. And to stop it from going away.

I no longer know which one of us is being carried; which one keeps the other standing tall.

## Dans la marge

Je m'emploie à délayer le quotidien.

J'arrache une page sur deux à l'agenda. Décroise les heures. M'insère entre les tic tac. Je laisse sonner le téléphone, fais tremper la vaisselle.

J'extrais chaque raisin de la mie du pain.

Je saute des lignes de mon cahier. M'habille de phrases amples, confortables. J'élargis les marges.

Le monde bouge dans ma main.

## In the Margins

I keep myself busy by undoing the day to day.

I rip out every second page in the agenda. I straighten up the hours and insert myself between the tick tocks of the clock. I let the phone ring and the dishes soak.

I remove each raisin from the bread dough.

I skip lines in my notebook. I dress myself in roomy, comfortable phrases. I increase the margins.

The world moves in my hand.

# Fragile

Ma tête ne risque pas de rouler jusqu'au sol. J'ai les tendeurs bien tirés entre les cervicales et le coccyx.

Je vis dans une poupée de cire. Je me dépose sur l'étagère parmi les figurines de collection. M'y installe pendant des jours, à l'abri du moindre frôlement et des regards salissants.

La vie m'attend à la fenêtre, tel un paysage inépuisable.

De temps à autre, je pousse un cri de chandelle éteinte. Agite un peu le petit doigt, la main, le bras entier. Pleure quelques gouttes de cire amère.

Puis je tape du pied. Implore enfin de descendre pour m'amuser un peu. Refais cent fois mes premiers pas.

## Fragile

My head is not in danger of rolling to the ground. My cables are strung tightly between neck and tailbone.

I live within a wax doll. I place myself on the shelf inside the figurine collection. I stay here for days, sheltered from the slightest touch or crooked look.

Life waits for me at the window, a limitless landscape.

From time to time, I let out the cry of an extinguished candle. I shake my little finger, my hand, and my entire arm. I cry a few bitter tears of wax.

Then I stamp my foot, and beg at last to come down and have some fun. And I take my first steps again, a hundred times over.

Larry Tremblay  
*Translation by Donald Winkler*

*from The Soldier Eye*

**The left eye (excerpt)**

In this time so near  
God is everywhere  
and no one  
is killing him

I was born  
in the twentieth century  
it must be so  
if not  
who else

My infant  
skull  
makes a rent  
in the day

I don't know  
what a day is made of  
later the night  
teaches me

Now  
I leap  
into a new time

I turn up  
in a cat's eye

I sleep  
in the palms  
of a long-haired woman's  
hands

Questions  
do not exist

I confer on the sun  
a gaze

I fill  
my pockets  
with tiny knives

I observe  
beyond the window  
cars  
growing in size

The night's headlights  
puzzle out the fog

My father offers me  
a watch  
he chains it  
to my wrist

I know  
what's flawed  
the penumbra of dictionaries

On my guard  
beneath street lights  
I smoke the stars

I grow up  
with the crowd  
boulevards and hope

I drink endless  
glasses of water

The sky  
overflows gutters  
falls onto my lashes

Astounding  
to be  
poised over the world  
like an idea  
on a spider's  
thread

My gums ache  
I love storms  
the scent of earthworms  
the petrifying forest

My eye  
during lunar evenings  
is as small  
as a sharpened pencil

I am  
fed with pasteurized milk  
gorged with honeymoons

I sometimes kill a fly

An ancestor within me  
bark fisted  
rocks my heart

Am I alone  
in my head's vessel  
or does the horde  
keep watch beneath my skin?

Who sleeps  
in my childhood sheets  
me or the uneasy  
body  
of my thoughts?

I begin to resemble  
my name

And yet  
no leaf  
looks like another

Never  
a twin to its shadow  
the tree  
does not protest

My head waits patiently

My mother  
shatters mirrors  
brothers and sisters  
there see themselves being born

I am taught  
commandments  
my schoolboy shirts  
starched  
learn them by heart

My head at rest  
I memorize  
Greek and Latin  
see through the window  
the azure paling

I drink coffee  
to grow more quickly

A dentist  
pulls seven of my teeth

I count  
my clots of blood  
I discover indifference

Stubborn  
I wait  
for eternity  
to drop down from heaven's hands

I am given a choice  
between good and evil

I can see little difference  
is there nothing else?

I scratch evil  
and find good

I scratch good  
and find evil

No one around me  
to talk to  
about it

In the morning  
I 'm not hungry  
I fight  
with my friends  
see their blood  
on the sidewalk

I pray  
my mouth empty  
my head beneath the pillow

I lie in wait  
for evil spells  
I defy  
phantoms

One night  
I hide  
under my bed  
among dust balls

If there is God  
there is Devil

Who will prove to me  
that the one is not the other?

Which one  
will dwell in my heart?

I hold my breath  
my lungs catch fire

I clutch my temples  
my room like an island  
rocks to and fro

My bones  
come loose  
within my sack of flesh

I make out the glow  
of a flashlight

Or is there  
a rift in my thoughts?

Am I going to abscond  
all at once  
fluid as a thief?

Flee myself  
leaving behind  
a child's skin  
my mother in the morning  
will sweep away with her broom?

I wake in my bed  
my smile stitched tight

I try to turn  
my head  
backwards  
even if I must lose  
two or three vertebrae

I want to spy  
on my back  
in case  
I grow wings

I need  
change  
a few feathers  
a gust of wind  
would make my day

To lose myself  
in a desert  
as well

No desert  
near my house

No sand dune  
in the gaze  
of my neighbours

I break an arm

In the hospital  
I eat oranges  
brought by my father

Never  
have I received so much love  
it makes me cry at night  
shamed by my tears  
upon the pillow

Much later  
twilight and orange  
conjoin  
and the horizon speaks to me  
of my father

I know ecstasy  
on a bicycle

I swallow colours  
hawk them back  
through my hair

I build up my thighs  
mounting  
my city's hills

Nothing more tender  
than speaking  
of one's first bicycle

Nothing more cruel  
when one morning  
it vanishes  
stolen  
by someone more wretched  
than oneself

I want to be reborn  
unhappy  
with my bones' positioning  
in the sky

I missed my childhood  
its train left without me

On the platform  
I discover shelves of books  
I steal one  
I overtake the train

I hear streaming from the pages  
a thirst for water

The book read  
I am haunted  
by misted castles  
masked balls  
dreamlike lands  
tales of love  
and gunfire

Fiction  
throws down the gauntlet  
to the real

I garner  
a second life

I read I read  
I discover  
the terror of happiness  
the mire of lies  
the weariness of glory

Pedalling day and night  
I see white I see black  
my eyes pocked with words

In a shack  
lodged in a maple tree  
I reap the blue

I breathe in  
books with their oxygen  
my impatience  
turns pages like the wind

Why love books  
so far from the roundness of flowers?

Am I so much alone  
with my brothers and sisters  
that I sit  
shadowed by words  
in the dust  
of dry days?

A book  
open-air brain  
a shimmering pond  
a dark staircase  
with a thousand serpents  
burrowing  
into childhood

Childhood  
another name for the infinite

I perceive  
red-eyed  
how much the real  
has failed to satisfy

Is not  
what is  
but a veneer for things  
a delusional garden  
implanted in grey matter  
a sputtering  
between mere nothings  
there to indulge  
in all that is?

What is behind what is?

I foretell youth grinding  
embers between its teeth

Anxiety sets in  
a customs post  
in the middle of my room

To enter  
into sleep  
I present  
a phosphorescent passport

I caress the portholes of my dream

Behind  
there glimmers a forest  
in the guise of speed

At dawn  
I clutch my adolescent  
rod  
and the word rod  
is written jonquil

What to do with this skin  
this superfluous skin?

To whom shall I offer it?

Where shall I plant it?

I envision  
elastic galaxies  
where I may strew  
girls' bodies  
and curl up with them

I read  
bloodstained newspapers

I feel alone  
product of an unhappy  
subtraction

My hair lengthens  
hurls questions to the wind

My clothes  
speak patchouli

I bleed from the nose  
stick  
bits of hashish  
onto needles

I fly up from my body  
rise to the ceiling  
blimp headed

I have shivers  
more visions still  
a field of sunflowers  
sonata of wind  
zebra sky

I beg forgiveness from the first passerby

It's God  
always him  
poised to bite into  
my Adam's apple

The routine  
I sleep with her  
rise with her  
despite the radiance  
of my early rising  
rod

Boredom roils  
my coffee

Nausea  
hangs down from the curtains  
of the family kitchen

The TV routinely  
mutters dust

I swallow  
razor blades  
undo what God  
has wrought  
in my organs  
along the way  
shredding childhood hosts

I feel  
for the man called  
Jesus

I don't like  
him to tell me stories  
to put me to sleep at night

I have too much rage  
for the rapes  
the priests  
anointed me with

My flashlights  
still probe  
their robes' darkness  
their souls' menagerie

Must I offer the other eye?

I bring to light  
a box of tools  
great havoc  
in my head

I thought myself  
closed on Sundays  
closed  
as I slept  
but since  
my birth  
I sleep  
with an open heart

Open to currents  
of air  
to nocturnal  
emissions  
between two  
chiming bells

I was  
overrun  
my thoughts  
sullied  
my every gesture  
spasmodic

I became  
a human stone  
in a landscape of iron  
taking breaths  
through red scars

Quick  
a deserted parking lot  
to be reborn

André Major

*Translation by Jean-Paul Murray*

*from The Devil's Wind (excerpt)*

2.

Marie-Ange was running her index over the dark circles under her grey eyes when she recognized Albert's gait, as he finally returned from his senseless escapade. Barely was the door opened, when she threw herself into his arms, to smother the animal joy rising inside her.

"You! You!"

She shouted those words amid tears she couldn't hold back, and which dampened Albert's shirt. He stood there stiff, with faraway eyes, as though insensitive to her enthusiasm, bothered, as well, to have been distracted from his dream. He even felt a little ridiculous for holding her fretful and haggard face, where he only detected a frightened happiness. She wouldn't smile until she felt some certainty, which was a long time in coming.

"Yes, it's me," he said, sighing with fatigue.

"I couldn't bear to wait any longer..."

She draws him towards the couch, in front of the stove, which has grown cold. Albert realizes that, in her disarray, she neglected to heat the house and that his absence created mayhem, making her suffer passively—the most unbearable of all sufferings. He then shows compassion, which she misinterprets, pulling off her sweater, unbuttoning her white blouse, and revealing her breasts. But he doesn't move, unable to abandon his delirium, filled to bursting with his recollection of La Verte. She has to undress him and, surrounded by a pile of clothes, bite his lips to convey the fire devouring her. He gets up a little suddenly.

"I'm cold. Is there anything to eat?"

He looks for the bottle of wine.

"I drank it all," she says.

"All of it?"

She doesn't answer. He walks back towards her.

"Even the bottles in our reserve?"

She doesn't dare answer, and he concludes that she threw herself at the wine as though it were a life preserver. He swells with unexplainable hatred and, to avenge himself, falls on her, scratching her shoulders and back till she moans with painful pleasure. He penetrates her, avoiding her mouth, nibbling the flesh of her shoulder. He takes no pleasure in it, only a sort of wild satisfaction; she desperately holds on to him.

Instead of losing themselves in each other, they wrestle against each other, he dizzies her, throws her into a frenzy without following her, with a fury that comes from far beyond himself. And this anger is still there following the body's appeasement, she saw it in his gaze, in the hardness of his face.

"You seem angry with me."

He shrugs. "I'm dead tired." He thinks that he does, in fact, resent her for being there, for having waited for him, suffered from his absence, being tied to him. He slowly gets dressed, because the house is humid and, without a word, he lights the fire. And, alone under Marie-Ange's gaze, he contemplates the flames, enjoying the burning sensation on his cheeks, forehead and neck. Those minutes are so long, so cruel, that Marie-Ange cries on the inside. She can't stand it when he's far from her, as he is on bad nights when he slowly and silently gets drunk, before wandering off between lake and mountain. It's a madness that frightens her. In daylight, he appears reasonable, his gaze is clear, but on those nights his eyes fill with wild glimmers. She once asked him to beat her, if it made him feel good; he'd gone outside swearing. Tonight, she admits she knows nothing about him. She falls asleep half-naked on the couch. Seated in front of the stove, he listens to the tobacco burning in his pipe. He brought in Loup, who lay at his feet. Night has fallen. He imagines what he should have said to La Verte, thinks about the radiance of her face, the fierceness in her eyes. Overcome with a desire to hold her so tight, to the point of forgetting everything, he gets dizzy. He gets up, lifts the glowing stove lid, shakes his pipe.

A cry comes from outside. And still more cries, from man or beast, it would be hard to say. But the cries are sharp enough to make him shiver. Caused by great pain. He steps outside with Loup, whose ears perk up. A sound of running through leaves, and then another cry, closer than the previous ones, coming from the lake, he thinks. He walks towards it, and Loup starts to run. Albert calls him back, but in vain. Suddenly, a black shape

rushes towards him with loud cries blending with Loup's furious barking. Grabbed, Albert is in disbelief: the dog's prey is holding on to him, and they both fall down; Albert struggles, shakes off the frantic stranglehold, but Loup doesn't let go. Albert wrestles with Loup, pulling him by the collar, muzzling him with his moist hands. The man gets up, breathing very hard.

"Goddamn dirty dog... I'll kill him, I'll kill him!"

"Tom, is that you? Is that you?" asks Albert.

"Albert?"

"Yes."

"Your damn dog..."

"I'm holding him, so run into the house. He's stronger than I am."

Tom doesn't wait for him to say it again; he runs as best he can, tripping and taking shelter in the house, where Albert joins him, after tying Loup to his doghouse. It's going to snow, he tells himself, smelling the air. It's in the air.

Tom is a pitiful sight. He looks like he's come straight from hell. His lips are cracked and smeared with dried blood. And his eyes, let's not even mention it, are round as quarters, red and crazed.

"Have a seat," says Albert, covering Marie-Ange.

Tom's ears are buzzing, and he's panting from running so much, screaming and wrestling with the dog. His breathing whistles in his throat.

"Calm down," says Albert.

"Where is she? I want to know," Tom says again.

"Who?"

"La Verte! I'm talking about La Verte! Tell me or I'll punch you in the face!"

Albert jumps up, on the defensive. Never has Tom spoken in that tone. Ashamed, he sits down.

"When the wind fell, I looked for her everywhere, I swear it! You didn't see her, eh? Because if you did see her, I want to know it."

Albert points to Marie-Ange, who's asleep, to make him understand he must lower his voice. Tom looks at Marie-Ange, whose mouth is agape.

"Act as though she no longer exists, as though she were dead," says Albert. "It's the best thing to do."

"I can't! It doesn't matter to you because you have a wife! It's not the same!"

"Nothing can be done. Wait. She'll come back if she wants to."

"I'll die if I wait, I'll jump in the water!"

He forgets that Marie-Ange is sleeping, and he starts yelling again, as though he were being hit.

“Don’t go crazy,” says Albert. “Calm down.”

All there is, for a few seconds, is the dry crackling of burning logs, blood coursing through Tom’s veins, Albert’s suppressed exasperation, and Marie-Ange resting amid the innocence of her appeased flesh. Outside, Loup is barking in the night, smelling the presence of his enemies. Night won’t end soon enough, thinks Albert, drawing deep puffs from his pipe, exhaling smoke through his nose, and then his mouth. Tom, seated near the stove, basks in the gentle warmth, in the peace that comes from the flames and a perfect night. By just enjoying the serenity spreading through them, they’ve stopped thinking about things that make the blood boil and create torrid delusions. Time goes by—oh! so very slowly—as if nothing had happened. It goes by, leaning on the limbs of those who are still awake to loosen them. Tom, imperceptibly, has closed his eyes, and his head has fallen onto his left shoulder. When the ventriloquist stove goes quiet, Albert stuffs it with ash and maple logs, which make a dull and distant hum, quite different from the moist crackling of conifers.

The night is so long and the mind easily gives in to games of memory (the eyes she had, her face raised towards me and her trembling voice). He wants to yell her name, take her and forget everything in the secret of that mountain where his heart has fled.

Outside, the night is dark and raucous, sometimes torn by the cries of animals, suffering trees, and it’s cold. On days of heavy snow flurries and strong biting winds, what will he do to avoid thinking of her, over there, and everything that could happen if he went to her (would that be so impossible? And why should it be?).

In Albert’s heart, the past is beating wildly, it’s in disarray, and Marie-Ange is losing her leading role, while La Verte smiles at him rather sadly.

When he said he was leaving this morning, Marie-Ange looked at him with her darkest gaze, without saying a word, and Tom thought he had to go with him.

“I’m going alone,” Albert said. “Alone.”

Did the wife and friend understand? They’re quiet as they finish sipping their already lukewarm coffee. Soft snow is falling heavily. Since that evening when Tom came down the mountain to upset his life, Albert has had sleepless nights that have marked his face. And in his weariness, he finds nothing to say or explain. All he has to do is get ready for a new de-

parture: grease his boots, clean his gun, stuff his bag with food, cartridges, tobacco, matches and pipes. After hesitating, he slips a black notebook and pencil into his pocket, an old reflex that angers him deep down. He leaves the house, their house, without heartache, barely ashamed of the solitude he's imposing on his wife.

He skirts around the lake, which the wind froze in the night, briskly heading down the path that runs between bare maple thickets, though they were still red only a week ago. He ties his black scarf around his neck, because the crisp air is creeping in through the opening of his collar. Above, the mountain top disappears into the powdery sky; above, is a girl who knows nothing about him, especially not that he set out to find her, like a knight on a quest to find the Holy Grail, like Jim Hawkins set out to find Treasure Island, like Ishmael set out to look for the whale. But she can't know that he set out to find her, quite simply, but to tell her what exactly, he wonders. That a very powerful and unspeakable urge drove him to her. She'll open wide her astonished and puzzled eyes, and no doubt answer that her life is here now, in this house where a generous and discrete friendship warms her. He thinks he'd lower his head and return home, where Marie-Ange will take him back as before. Guessing this, he still keeps walking through the snapping trees... Which snap but stand against everything that tortures them. The wind's breath, cutting as a blade, has depleted them. I'm walking on the ruins of summer, Albert tells himself. Soon, all there'll be is a huge white expanse, barely broken up by conifers. In the middle of that desert, smoke will rise from houses, signalling that humans choose life over the temptation of yielding to the force of circumstances. In a lonely house, a young girl might think of him, coming to ask for her affection, and she'll tell him he has a wife, and that's enough, that she doesn't have the heart to take on a rival, that, besides, her heart belongs to no one, proof being that she ran away from Tom's cabin. Bitterly, he'd tell her that Tom is Tom, that he's Albert, someone else, in other words, who thirsts for her.

\* \* \*

An observer would think he's walking briskly, even hurriedly, as though he were almost running away, as though he didn't want to give his body time to mark his passing with a fugitive shadow. Is he afraid of his shadow? Afraid of reaching the Indians' house too late? Or afraid this journey makes no sense if he thinks about it? Anyhow, he never stops; he moves ahead

knowing exactly what path to travel—which obstacles to avoid, which detours and shortcuts to take!

When he's really out of breath, when his lungs ask for a little relief, he puts down his bag and gun, then sits on a stump. Suddenly, light bouncing steps distract him. It's a jackrabbit hopping across the path. He shoots and, this time, the animal rolls on its side, making tiny mournful cries that are soon extinguished. He grabs it by the rear legs and ties it to his bag. He chews on a biscuit, then starts walking again. On the opposite side of the mountain is a house, where he imagines seeing La Verte making lunch. He suddenly feels free, free as he hasn't been in a long time, ready to start his life over, after all those lives that weren't the right one. He's twenty-five years old and filled with restless passion.

But he wasn't so brave when he saw La Verte piling onto her right arm quartered logs that had been stacked along the wall opposite the wind. She hasn't seen him because his footsteps are muffled by thin snow that softens the leaves. And now that he's behind her, not a word comes to his mouth. What will he look like? When she turns around, alarmed by a presence she just felt behind her, Albert unties the hare, approaching to hand it to her.

"Perhaps you like jackrabbit?"

Without another word, he hands her the jackrabbit stiffened by the cold and death as tribute. She stands there, hesitating, looking at him, and then the beast. With his eyes, Albert begs her to at least accept his offering. She doesn't know why he came all the way here to bring her the animal he shot. But what really worries her is Tom's ruse; he may be hiding in the bushes, counting on Albert and his rabbit to distract her. He'll then jump out and no one will defend her, she'll be trapped. Yet Albert's gaze is clear as fresh spring water.

"Are you alone?"

"Yes!" says Albert. "Who did you think I came here with?"

"You know..."

She examines the shadows behind the bushes.

"I wanted to talk to you..."

That said, what would he add? And she's astonished: "Talk to me, what for?"

"Tom is at my place. He didn't follow me, I swear it."

They look at each other. Embarrassed by their silence, they examine the hare. He'd like to speak, but even if he searches deep inside himself, words fail him, they melt like ice in the sun, they abandon him.

“Do you know the mountain?”

“No, not very well.”

“It’s lovely,” he says, “especially on the other side, near the falls.”

He’d say anything to ward off the crushing silence: that it started snowing before dawn, that winter will be here soon, that it will be harsh.

“I’m afraid to go there because of him.”

She’s again talking about Tom, the dark shadow that forces her to live like a wild beast in a house where she may no longer be afraid. But Albert’s eyes don’t lie; she quickly takes the rabbit into the house, and comes back wrapped in a shawl.

“We’ll head down the path and turn left. The falls are a little further away,” he says.

They walk side by side, making small talk, as though to justify their presence along the path. They hear the crashing sound of water from a distance. La Verte stealthily follows the guide. Ten minutes later, they reach a promontory overlooking a chasm of foam.

“Oh! My God!” she cries out.

“In the spring, the current is much stronger; it makes a hell of a noise.”

“I wouldn’t want to fall in there.”

And then she shivers.

“You mustn’t get too close.”

They again stop talking, fascinated by the water’s power, the raging swirls, by the solitude that suddenly surrounds them.

“I’m cold,” she says.

So Albert takes her back to the house. Walking in, they smell birch burning in the stove. The father is standing in front of the table, cleaning the jackrabbit. He doesn’t speak to them. The mother puts cabbage soup on the stove. No longer knowing what to do with the companion she brought back, La Verte forgets about him and doesn’t even ask him to sit down. Albert walks over to the father, who’s working with his children around him like silent disciples.

They ask him to stay for supper. They had to; after all, he brought the jackrabbit. Through the window, he looks at the gently falling snow. The children had gone outside to run about; as they came back in, Albert put on his jacket, grabbed his gun, his bag, and saluted everyone. Le Verte took one step towards the door, but stayed where she was, between the stove and table.

He ate well and doesn’t suffer too much from the cold inside a shelter

built under the pine trees, near the house where the lamp's yellow glow will keep him company for a long time still. But from his refuge, he barely notices that the sky is so beautiful, white and cloudy tonight... He dreams of her a little shamefully, as though she were something forbidden. And then, with a heavy body from having walked all day and eating a hearty meal, he dozes off, head buried under prickly wool covers. And if he has the misfortune of waking up, it's to remember the sad evening, the silence of the people who hosted him without friendship, only because he'd brought them a jackrabbit. Even La Verte must have suffered from the general embarrassment.

And then morning breaks with a pink sky. To dry his wet clothes, Albert lights a fire in the middle of the meadow and smiles happily at the sight of crackling flames. If La Verte were here, beside him, she'd enjoy this feast of fir branches, but she's still locked up inside the secret of the smokeless house. She won't come running to his domain, carved out of the mountain, the bushes and falls. And yet the doors are wide open to her, and he holds his hand out for her, waits for her, adores her. He's a young woodsman who also knows the dark paths of the heart, especially since he felt La Verte's gaze burning his fragile certainties of a man married too early. He's young, younger than ever in the cool morning air, amid these short spruce trees where melted snow is pearly, so young in air filled with the fragrance of earth and decaying leaves. Young and handsome like a free man at the dawning of his destiny! His gaze is a fast-moving stream that jumps over the earth's obstacles, finds a path towards his future and then rushes while singing towards the woman who might, when the sun is higher, come to join him and sing as well, the hymn of enchanted bodies.

She'll be the new wife, if she wants to, the woman who must, better than all others, wrench a perfect cry of the heart from him. Her hand will stir up great storms and deep turmoil inside him; her mouth will make him waver in a prolonged wedding night the gods themselves dream about. She'll be the Indian queen before whom his desires, even the wildest ones, will bow and be quenched. He knows it must be so, and he circles the fire to prepare for this, tossing ever more branches into it; their sap is a balm.

Let the new wife simmering with love come to him! Let her come and take him while the hot blood of his folly rises inside him. Because the lump in his throat was put there by the violent hymn that will change into a shout, if it can't rise above the tallest trees, with the accompaniment of a sweet, sweet echo...

Let her quickly join him in singing this hymn!

He rejoiced and rejoiced so much amid the smoke and smell of resin, he danced and danced and trumpeted his call that, in the end, he laughed, cried, complained as well, when he realized she wasn't coming. No, you aren't coming, you can't come... And I'm a poor fool who's ashamed of his love and who'd like to mow down everything around him, stab the sky, damn the sun. And then run like a condemned man, dive in the falls, feel his body being broken, and torn apart piece by piece until everything fell silent!

But before that, oh! to take her, hug her so tight that her heart would rise to her throat, that she'd cry out like a possessed woman.

Even if you complain and suffer enough to harden your viscera, even if you spit on the world, on the tall desolate maples, on the blinding sky, on the peacefully sleeping snow, nothing moves, nothing, and your shouts come back to you as unrecognizable echoes.

Indeed, the sun will soon latch onto the midday sky, its rays will spread all around, from north to south, everywhere, on both sides of the mountain, wherever you go, and you'll be weary from thinking of your petty man's sorrow, of your loneliness, of the woman who has every right not to come here. Go back to where you came from!

After a while, Albert's throat gets dry from calling out to himself so much, and he'd like to drop down over there, against a tree trunk lying across his path. He picks up his gun, after rolling his blankets and tying them to his bag; stepping slowly, off he goes towards the path that, heading upwards, leads to La Verte's place, and downward to his home where his wife most certainly awaits him with rancour-filled words and bitter loneliness deep in her heart. Pity calls him towards her, but instinct gives him strength to walk up the hill and confront La Verte's stubborn silence. Following several hesitations, he decides he must head up there and nowhere else.

And so he walks up the hill.

He knocks on the door. She's not the one who opens it; doesn't matter, he sees her, he salutes her. Here she comes.

"I want to speak to you some more, if I can."

La Verte blushes, but grabs her shawl and follows him outside. He shook her hand, which she didn't give freely. He feels that it's stiff with reluctance. In the mild afternoon air, she begins to think her hand feels good in his; she nearly opens it wide to see what joy there is in this simple union of

hands. Fear keeps her from doing so. He releases her hand, perhaps disappointed that his boldness is so poorly rewarded. They walk haphazardly. She listens to him, delighted by his voice as it leaps and runs through the huge white winter; she starts to believe in that winter, which he says comes in tiny consecutive layers, even if the sun makes it look like summer, as it does today. His words light up the autumn, suddenly filled with beautiful things, like an orchard. Life sings, and the minutes no longer go by, they flow and carry them. She'd never seen autumn before today. He's showing her a secret garden. "There's gold on everything, look." He points to the clearing where the tiniest leaf is more than itself, more than a simple leaf that died by growing red; it becomes something pure, luminous, something that forces you to live in that single moment of contemplation.

She looks at him, somewhat distraught.

"Must be very late. It makes me sad to leave, but I have to," she says.

"Go on," he says, smiling, "I'll rest a little, and I'll wait for you."

"Thank you, oh! Thank you!"

It's as though he'd just promised her the world and its glittering madness, as though her waiting for a man is all that rendered precious the time she spent with him, the time she'll spend with him later, once supper chores are finished. She rushes back to the house, hands raised like young girls do when they run. And he looks at her disappear for an hour, perhaps two, but no more, he hopes, because that would be a painful eternity of wondering what she's doing, where she's at, plunging her hands in a pot, checking to see that everything is tender, the vegetables and meat, whether everything is ready for the meal's routine celebration. Meanwhile, he'll walk amid the sultriness of those images, pacing the area back and forth, eyes searching with worry and impatience the house that more than ever makes him feel like a stranger. Because it isn't his house, which is down the mountain, between the lake and gravel road, where a woman lives who's become a stranger to him without his willing it. In his mind, she's like a dahlia, which is to say, a flower that has no fragrance, or rather, which has lost the fragrance that could have kept him. He muses that even if she did have a fragrance, he's no longer sensitive to it, he can no longer smell it. La Verte smells like lily of the valley, and I can't love two flowers at once. It's a matter of knowing whether the dahlia can survive without him, whether he must forget about the lily of the valley to save her. But why would he forget about it, why would he saddle himself with that absurd sacrifice, so absurd when he thinks about it. If some power ordered him back to his wife, he couldn't

comply, he'd feel he was committing a sacrilege. His place is here, among the fir branches, cedar bushes, young birch trees, near the path that leads to La Verte and her beautiful radiant smile. And this is so obvious, so true, that he no longer moves, that his feet take root in the autumn's spongy soil. And nothing will pull him out of it, not even the north wind, the furious Devil's wind that blew Tom's cabin down and took La Verte from him. And now he remembers Tom, poor Tom, who stayed at the house for fear of being alone, no doubt, lamenting about his lost love to Marie-Ange. And she listens to him, to drown her sorrows, forget the doubts that weigh on her heart at the thought that Albert, her Albert, is running through the woods looking for who knows what image of happiness. She must think his wandering craze has simply grabbed hold of him again; maybe she still hasn't guessed the reason for his journey. He'd then have to tell her everything and endure the unbearable pressure of her pain, to tell her his firm intention of living by following his instincts.



## Contributors

**Alisa Belanger** holds a *Maîtrise en langue et littérature françaises* from McGill University as well as a doctorate in French & Francophone Studies from UCLA. After beginning her career at Georgetown University and Rutgers University—Camden, she now teaches in her hometown of Rochester, NY. In 2013, she published *Things that Fall*, a translation of *Tombeau de Lou* by Denise Desautels, at Guernica Editions.

**Denise Desautels** was born in Montreal. She is a past vice-president of the Académie des lettres du Québec. She won the Prix de la Fondation Les Forges for *Leçons de Venise* (1990), the original French version of *Lessons from Venice*. She also won the Governor General's Award and the Prix de la revue Estuaire for *Le saut de l'ange* (1992), the Prix de la Société des écrivains canadiens and the Prix de la Société Radio-Canada for *Tombeau de Lou* (2000). In 1999 she received La Médaille Échelon vermeil, the highest honour given by the city of Paris.

**André Major** is a writer from Quebec most noted for his novel *Les Rescapés*, which won the Governor General's Award for French-language fiction in 1976. He was later nominated in the same category in 1987 for *L'Hiver au cœur* and in 1995 for *La Vie provisoire*, and for the Governor General's Award for French-language non-fiction in 2008 for *L'Esprit vagabond*. A poet in the early 1960s, he was a founding member alongside Paul Chamberland, André Brochu, Pierre Maheu and Jean-Marc Pottie of the political and cultural magazine *Parti pris* in 1963. He was awarded the Prix Athanase-David in 1992. His most recent novel, *À quoi ça rime?*, was published in 2013.

**Joanne Morency** lives on the Gaspé Peninsula in eastern Quebec. She has published five poetry collections with Montréal's Éditions Triptyque and two books of haibun (poetic prose and haiku) with Ottawa's Éditions David. She has received several awards including the 2015 CBC poetry prize and the 2010 award for a first collection in Paris.

A writer, certified translator, researcher and communications specialist, **Jean-Paul Murray** has translated nineteen books. From 1995 to 1998, he was managing editor of *Cité libre*, a magazine founded by Pierre Elliott Trudeau. He was the magazine's English translating coordinator from 1998

to 2000. Among his *Cité libre* translations are works by Allan Cairns, Jacques Hébert, Mordecai Richler, F.R. Scott and Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In 2015, he was French-language translator for the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. An experience from which he is still recovering.

**Larry Tremblay** has published more than 30 books as a playwright, novelist, poet and essayist. His acclaimed theatrical works have been produced around the world. In 2006, he was awarded the Canada Council Victor-Martyn-Lynch-Staunton Prize for his contribution to theatre. The prestigious press Gallimard Paris published *Piercing*, a collection of three of his short stories. *L'impureté* (*The Impurity*), his last novel, came out in 2016. Until 2009 Larry Tremblay taught acting and dramatic writing at l'École supérieure de théâtre de l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

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**Jill Varley's** studies in literature and languages have taken her to the University of Regina, Université Laval, and Montréal's McGill and Concordia Universities. She holds a Masters in English Literature and is currently completing her Masters in Translation Studies.

**Donald Winkler** is a Montreal-based literary translator and documentary filmmaker. In the realm of poetry, he has made films on Irving Layton, P.K. Page, F.R. Scott, among others. And, among others, he has translated Roland Giguère and Pierre Nepveu. He is a three-time winner of the Governor General's Award for French to English translation.



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