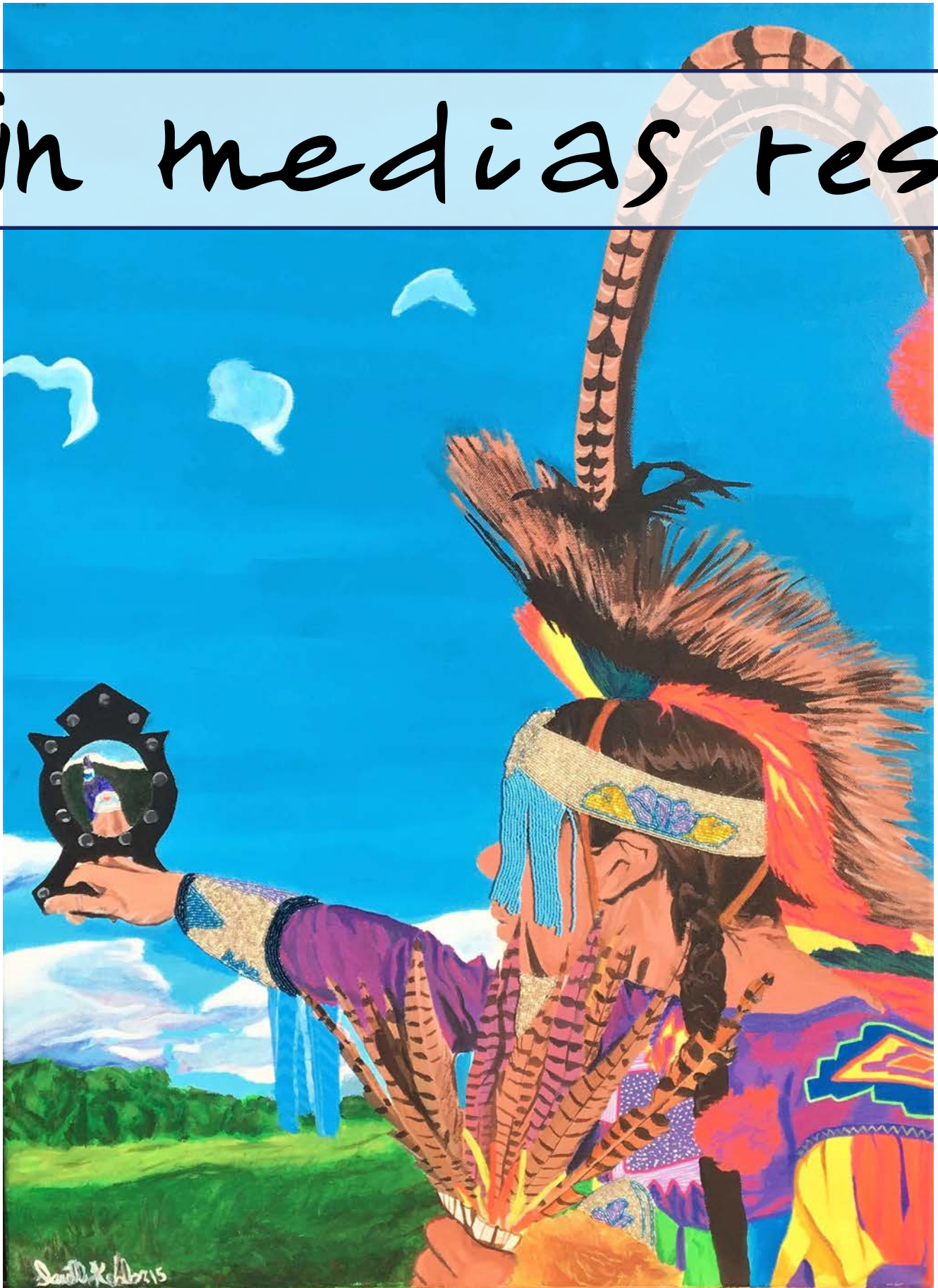


# in medias res



# EDITORIAL POLICY

*In Medias Res is a student-run journal devoted to the liberal arts in light of the Christian intellectual tradition. Published twice per year by St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan, our title describes the experience of university life, in which we are always caught “in the middle of things”. Living and working among many ideas within the university and in the wider world, we*

*have the opportunity to reflect critically on society, culture, and ourselves. The journal aims to provide a forum for intelligent and meaningful community expression. We publish poetry, fiction, articles, essays, travelogues, photography, art, and more. Students, staff, faculty, and alumni of all disciplines and backgrounds are encouraged to contribute by submitting their work.*

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COVERART: DAYLIGHT MEDICINE MAN | MIXED MEDIA, ACRYLIC & BEADS ON CANVAS BY DANIELLE KEHLER

# SHE:KON, KAIATANORON DUMOULIN BUSH IONKIATS.

Kanien-kéha:ka / French-Canadian niwakonhwentsio:ten. Ohkwa:ri niwaki taro:ten.

Hello, my name is Kaiatanoron Dumoulin Bush. I am Kanien-kéha:ka / French-Canadian from Chateauguay, Quebec and I am Bear clan. I am also a freelance illustrator, studio artist, and music and arts educator with the Encore! Sistema program based out of Kahnawake, Quebec. I am a semester away from completing my BFA in Indigenous Visual Culture and I love to draw.

My mother raised my sister and me as Christians and we attended a Catholic church every Sunday for many years. Specifically, we attended the beautiful Basilique Cathédrale Marie-Reine-du-Monde in downtown Montreal (We will come back to this later!) While I believe that everyone has the right to their own spiritual practices as long as they do no harm to others, nothing sobers you up quite like walking through a residential school graveyard. Pope Francis still refuses to apologize for the atrocities committed against Indigenous children in residential schools and there are those (Lynn Beyak and friends) that feel residential schools were necessary and beneficial for Indigenous peoples. Clearly, neither church or state are banging down doors to reconcile.

I was not allowed to have video games in the house growing up. Only in mid-July of this year did we welcome video games into our house. For my mom's birthday, we bought her a smart TV. We watched her yell at the screen and get nauseous while playing Asphalt 8. Despite my lack of video game experience, I know that certain forms of entertainment such as video games, mobile games, movies, and TV all inform how we understand ourselves and the world around us. Certainly, all I consumed had a direct effect on who I was and who I am today. I grew up believing that Indigenous people came from Asia over the Bering Strait. (A theory that evidence has been mounting against for some time.) After a nasty custody battle in which my connections with my Indigenous family were severed quite violently, I had no pride in being half-colonizer

and half-colonized. I did my best to rationalize and eventually, I convinced myself that "Natives were just discount Japanese people." I went to anime conventions and I even made the pilgrimage to Japan. I fetishized and idolized. All I wanted was to be thin, pale, live in Japan, and be as far away from Turtle Island as physically possible.

Thankfully, my attitude shifted drastically when an art history teacher of mine claimed that there was no such thing as art on this continent before it was invaded by settlers. Something lurched inside of me. Perhaps it was my ancestors rolling in their graves. I knew that the teacher was wrong but I had no way of articulating it. The teacher went on and on about the Venus of Willendorf (I love that sculpture, by the way) but they offered me nothing from Turtle Island. They spoke as if creative expression had arrived with the Vikings, took a vacation and came back with Jaques Cartier. Creative expression is apparently a symptom of humanity. Claiming that the millions living on the continent before the invasion could not produce art is claiming that they were subhuman and incapable. Uncivilized. Animals. While I knew this was absolute nonsense, I had never heard of any Indigenous artists. There were no Indigenous people on TV or in the movies, unless they were being used as props, i.e. the exotic love interest or the enemy of a white hero. Or, they were Graham Green narrating Exhibit A, a true crime show that mostly featured cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women. So, I started digging, and would you look at that! I was right. After studying Indigenous Visual Culture for four years and teaching violin and art to Indigenous children from my home community for five years, I came to know a plethora of Indigenous artists and art practices. Pre- and post-contact! I understood that my relationship with my Indigeneity, my self-esteem, my creativity, and the entertainment I consumed was a hot mess. And most importantly, I came to know that creative expression is essential for building a kind and prosperous future for our Indigenous children.



What does it mean when you can't envision a tomorrow?

Let us go back to Basilique Cathédrale Marie-Reine-du-Monde for a second. A replica of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, it comes with pews, candles, and LOTS of gold. Incense floats through the air and massive paintings line the wings of the nave and transepts. The whole shebang. There is one painting that has always stuck with me. I used to stare at it and feel included in the Catholic narrative. It depicts a group of Indigenous Women and

Girls sat around a nun, content with books in their laps. She too with a book in her lap, the nun appears to be scolding a little Indigenous girl about ten to twelve years of age, no older than the girls I currently have at summer

camp. The girl hangs her head in shame and keeps her hands behind her back as the sun literally sets over the valley and supposedly over her culture, language, and Indigeneity. What did she do to be shamed in front of crowds of people attending midnight mass for all perpetuity? Today we know that the purpose of colonial systems is to subjugate and wipe out all traces of Indigeneity. We also know that the project has failed. Indigenous peoples continue to refuse, resist, and change the system by creating, reclaiming, and occupying space.

Today, I asked my students to draw themselves doing things they loved. When explaining his drawing, one student said: "I want to be a cat when I grow up!" While not exactly what I had assigned, what was so important about his declaration is that he envisions himself in the future and he is excited about it! This is what I understand the power of playing and creating video games to be. The player exists in 3D and 2D spaces with a certain amount of agency depending on

the game's design. These spaces are simultaneously intangible and ubiquitous, and will become even more so as the internet and digital realms are persistently interwoven into our lives. In popular MMORPGs and sandbox games such as Fortnite and Minecraft, possibilities are limitless. The player has world-building capabilities, they can become anything, and the smallest being can move mountains. It is the potential that exists in these acts of making and designing that empowers Indigenous youth to imagine and build a kind and

prosperous tomorrow. For Indigenous youth—although they may not be aware of it yet—being able to play, to pretend, to exist in the moment, exist today, and exist tomorrow, are monumental acts of resistance. Imagining

tomorrow resists the intergenerational trauma imposed upon Indigenous peoples by the colonizer. It resists the housing crises facing multiple Indigenous communities. It resists the suicide crises facing multiple Indigenous communities. It resists those who would seek to exploit and murder us for their pleasure. While I cannot pretend that video games and artistic endeavour can repair all the damage done by colonial powers, it is my responsibility to encourage and empower my Indigenous students to practice their creativity however they choose. Remember the little girl in that painting? Being free of shame, knowing that you are worthy of love, and worthy of the future that you have created with your own hands—that is what is most important.

IG @owlerfish  
kaiatanoron.format.com

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“...creative expression is essential for building a kind and prosperous future for our Indigenous children.”

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# WAITING MÉTIS

Vanessa Johnson

Waiting...

I've lied in the cool grass waiting...  
I'm waiting for someone to find me.  
I'm nervous it will be the red coats.  
So far, the shade of a tree has shielded  
me from enemy footsteps.  
The camouflage of night has saved me.  
The sun will soon rise, and I cannot  
hide once it does.  
They will see my shoes, my gun, and  
my clothes.  
They will see me trying to be small.  
As I lay here my mind wanders.  
How I love my wife and children.  
All brave, daring, and free.  
They are made of wild hearts and pure  
passion.  
I hope they've learned that from me.  
I'm waiting for the sun to rise.  
I'm waiting for my loyal Métis, but if  
the red coats do come first...  
Am I waiting for the end of me?

# AVERSION TO DEFEAT

Chelaine Kirsch

There's a difference between the dead  
and the damaged—  
it's a path the brave walk along.  
They are unafraid of the deceased, the  
savage,  
and walk in time with their own song.  
The brave save no word unheard, do not  
stay away from risk.  
They meet their monsters with melodies  
and their misery with bliss.  
They keep their chins high and smiles  
wide,  
no matter how the flames of falsity rise.  
They play their way through every charade  
until the game dies  
and the objective is realized,  
until happiness is what hides  
under the mask of courage.



# THE MISSION AND THE FREAKS

Jayson Maruschak

Running through the abandoned streets is commonplace now. I rely on the hot, hazy air to fuel my lungs and feel the dull thud of sneakers on asphalt. The ambient sounds catch my attention, but I don't hear any other people.

I stop and rest against a rusted-out Plymouth Fury, keeping my eyes open on the alleys and the cars. I decide that it is safe and move to the trunk, emptying my pack and my person:

- Assorted canned foods
- 1 can opener (emergency)
- 2 hunting knives (sharpened)
- 1 handgun w/ matching holster (3 bullets)
- 1 suppressor
- 1 flashlight, 2 batteries
- Medicine (can't remember what for)
- 3 bottles of water (1 full, 2 half-full)
- 35 boxed bullets
- 2 sunglasses (1 black, 1 green)
- 1 machete scabbard (no machete)
- 1 functioning wristwatch
- 1 finger, wrapped in red hair (2 days severed, I think)

Everything is the same as last time I checked. I pack it back up, except for the finger. I don't even remember how I got this. It's discolored and small, with red nail polish beginning to fade. A faint smell of decay comes from it. I toss it onto the street and duck into the lobby of a business building, taking a spot behind a desk. I keep my eyes trained on the finger, my own resting on the trigger of my gun.

Just gotta wait.

Even rotting can't keep them away.

In no time at all, a freak enters the street. It sniffs around and zeroes in on the finger. My trigger finger itches but I can't afford the corpse. As soon as it's done snacking, the freak begins walking away. I check the time and nod to myself, slowly standing up and following it. It's dangerous, it's stupid, and it's suicidal.

But it's my only option. I can't afford to wait.

Following the freak is surprisingly boring. I keep my distance and stay out of sight, but it never looks back. Even when I knock over a trash can, it continues on. Maybe I've finally found some luck. After an hour of walking, it leads me to one of the generic buildings downtown. Scanning the area is pointless; I haven't seen or heard anyone else besides the freak and me. It walks inside the building and I pause, taking out my gun and attaching the silencer.

By the time I enter the building, the freak is gone and the light is fading fast. I strain to listen through the choking silence and hear some rustling noises near an office. Approaching the door, I peer inside and see a group of freaks huddled around something, eating away. A trail of fresh blood leads me from the door to a hallway, that, as far as I can tell, is empty. I poke around with my flashlight and see the trail leads into another room. After a moment's preparation, I point my gun through the doorway, nerves jangling as my flashlight shines around the room.

There she is.

She's tied up securely and sleeping, though my light is beginning to wake her. Various corpses surround her. An object lies by her feet. Her clothes are torn and bloody and chunks of her red hair have been ripped out.

I was expecting worse, to be honest.

After closing the door, I set my light down and take out one of my knives. Her eyes, open now, start to register I'm not one of them. She makes muffled sounds through her gag, begging me to cut her free. But I ignore her questioning eyes and pick up the object by her feet. It's a machete, very sharp and lightweight. Examining the handle, I see the initials A.M. carved into the wood. I slide the machete into my scabbard, look at her, and smile.

"You didn't think I'd find you, did you?"

Her eyes finally show recognition as she scans my face. She stops trying to talk and stares fearfully at the knife.

"Not going to lie, I'm surprised you survived that ambush. Your group sure as hell didn't. And you thought I died too."

I stand now and turn back to the door, walking away. Her cries get louder. Squeezing the door-knob, I groan and go back, hurriedly cutting through the ropes before she can take another breath. She stretches away from me, gingerly moving her joints and avoiding the wound on her hand, the area with the lost digit.

"Count yourself lucky. Don't steal my shit again."

Now I finally turn away from her, crossing to the door and quietly pulling it open. I don't look back as I hear her struggle to speak. I'm at the end of the hallway before she finally says something, but I can't make out the words.

## DO VIDEO GAMES CONTRIBUTE TO REAL-WORLD VIOLENCE?

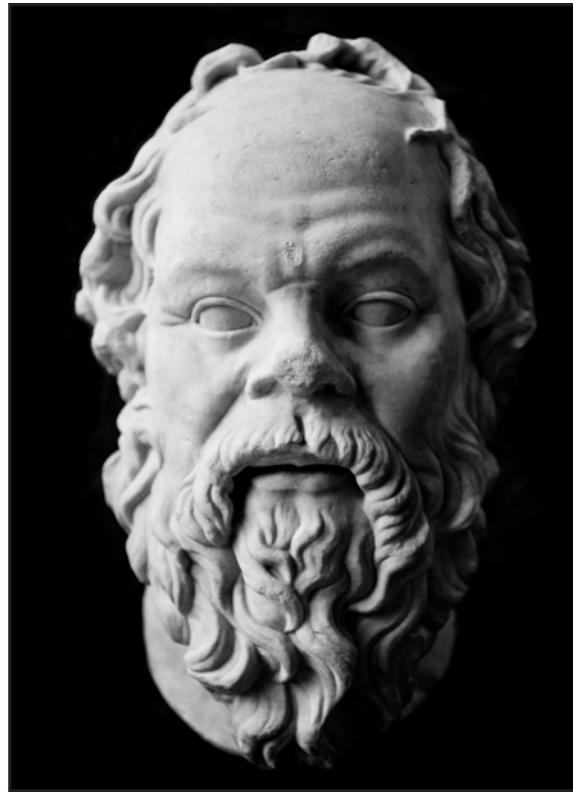
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For each journal issue, members of the In Medias Res editorial board assail the University of Saskatchewan's academic community with a quasi-philosophical question, after the fashion of Socrates.

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*“Depending on the definition of violent crimes, the crimes appear to be stagnant at worst or declining at best. Therefore it’s difficult to say with any certainty that video games cause violence since violence hasn’t increased significantly or consistently since their appearance.”*  
– Austin, Interactive Systems Design

*“We have never lived in a safer period of time that we do now in North America. Despite the exponential increase of video games and video game players the rate of violence and assault has gone significantly down, especially among that demographic. Experts who say that violent video games and other media cause violence are in the minority. There is no causal link between violence and video games.”*  
– Anonymous, Arts & Science



*“If you’re consistently shooting representations of people, I think you’re desensitizing yourself to how horrible that actually is. Of course playing a game doesn’t make anyone hurt people, but a violent game would probably encourage those tendencies in violent people.”*  
– Anonymous, Arts & Science

*“I believe any media that you watch influences you whether you purposefully want it to or not. I think this is particularly true with video games in today’s society.”*  
– Mekayla, Animal Bioscience

*“I believe that the easily accessible images and virtual portrayals of violence in today’s world certainly impacts the society we live in. However, I think that the real-world violence that seems to be ever-so present in our society is an incredibly complex issue with many different factors contributing to it, and no ‘quick fix.’”*  
– Alyssa, Kinesiology



## BALD AND BLUE

Aaron Marie Nepoose

My ankles burn with the plains.

Here, all is bare.

My pain. My fury.

Before the sage, and the bald land,

I would sit on Grandfather Mountain  
Shoulders.

Brown cabin, quiet, lit cedar.

Beside the ocean, life,

I breathed with the pine.

The waves taught me how to wave back,  
as I swam with my little arms, legs,  
heart.

At night I told sister stars I was lonely.

They keep stories. That's why  
there's so many of them.

Big sister Moon has powers to make tears  
shine.

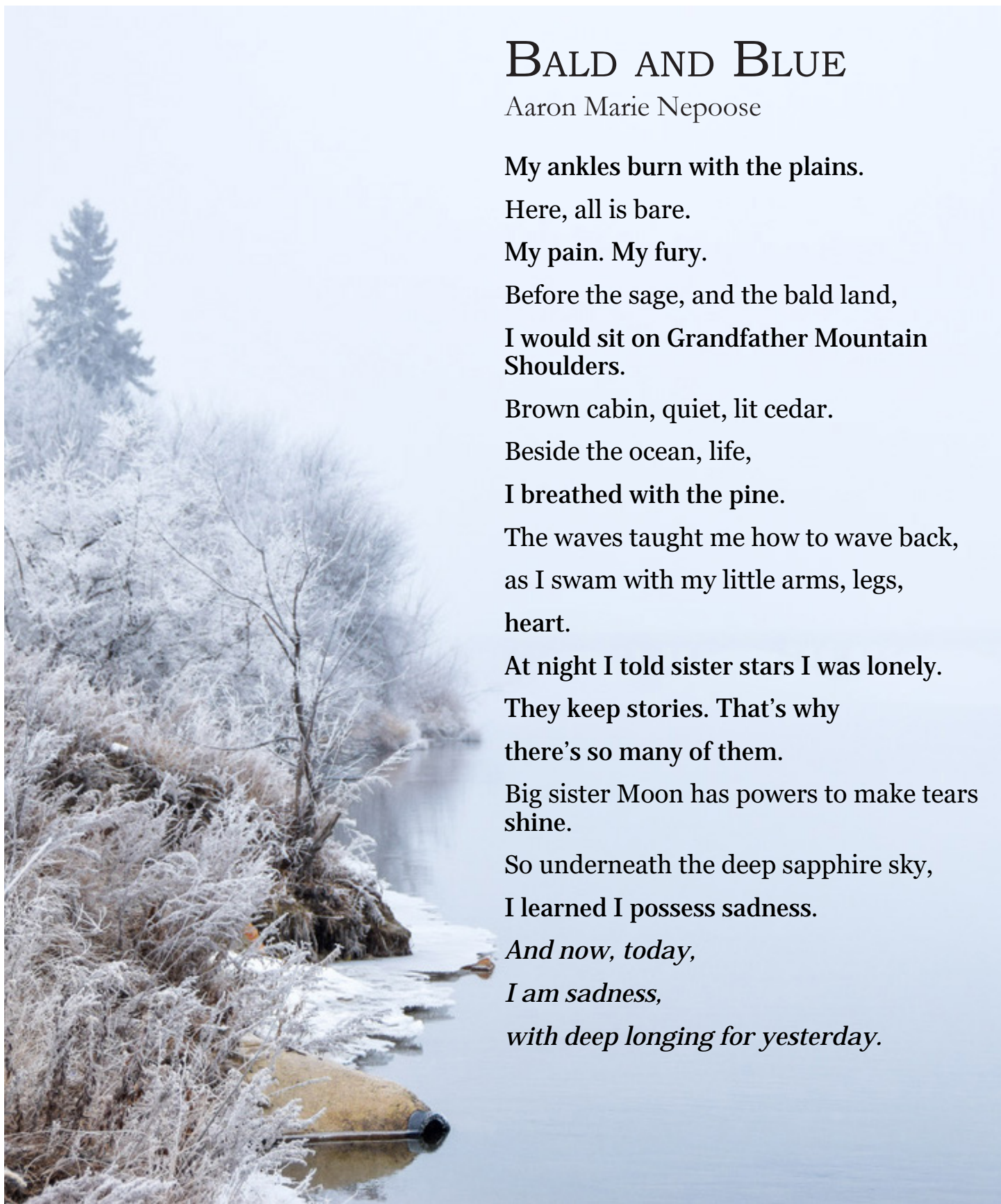
So underneath the deep sapphire sky,

I learned I possess sadness.

*And now, today,*

*I am sadness,*

*with deep longing for yesterday.*



# NIKAWIY BELLY

Aaron Marie Nepoose

Nikawiy Askiy birthed all, even me.  
She gave life to Nikawiy, who received  
her gift from sweet Nohkum when she conceived.  
That is life's way, inside Iskwew belly.  
I was here long ago, with Nikawiy.  
Her longer hair, wiser eyes, were deceived  
that we were not sisters, but I believed.  
I'm just as old, yet I will outlive she.  
The honor to birth two generations  
lives within me. But only when I choose.  
I will follow along in tradition  
when there is more love and light in the blues.  
Their birth will become my contemplation,  
and I know time is all I have to lose.



# MIDSUMMER TWILIGHTS

Katherine DeCoste

Cicadas are humming in the sounds of June,  
ice cream melting on the sidewalk, heat  
radiating

from the cement. When we watch the moon  
rising, the heat does not slide off the  
afternoon.

Everything is humid, and the alarm-bell,  
incessant tune

of the insects is the soundtrack to our sticky-  
lip kisses.

This is a photograph with torn edges, in grey,  
that you gave me shortly after, taken by my  
sister

hiding in the bushes. The image is blurred by  
what we can't unsee,

our tired childhoods lost in the dying day  
of summer's labour pangs. She clenches her  
fists.

She wakes to kill the residues of play.

Trees mechanically buzz with the sound of a  
thousand wings

rubbing, rubbing, rubbing together in the  
soupy

air. Between day and night the twilight  
always brings

freedom, like our parents may forget we sit  
outside on the porch,

like we may spend our whole lives like kings,  
living off of lemonade-sugar, watermelon,  
and each other.





# NORSE OLD ENGLISH

Darius Simonot

The Old Norse language came to England with the Danish and Norwegian invasions that began in the late 8th century. More permanently established closer to the middle of the 9th century, the largely Danish newcomers were conquerors and settlers. This relationship with the Anglo-Saxon and Northumbrian peoples dictated the ways in which Old Norse influenced existing Old English dialects. Some similarities and possible mutual intelligibility existed between the two languages, but during the early invasion period they blended only in very selective ways. More than just gifting loanwords, various aspects of Old Norse grammar, phonetics, and even Old Norse word meanings for existing Old English words were incorporated into English through the Middle English period, having profound and diverse effects which have lasted to the present day.

One of the earliest and simplest ways in which Old Norse changed English was through loanwords. In the early invasion period, in the 9th and 10th centuries, this was limited to words related to warfare, conquest, and rule: ON *drengr* (OE *dreng*, meaning warrior), ON *log* (OE *lagu*, now ME *law*), ON *utlagi* (OE *utlaga*, now ME *outlaw*), among others (Crystal, 71). Some of these terms fell out of use, while some, like *law* or *outlaw*, would endure. Other words entered the English lexicon during the second period of Scandinavian invasion in the 11th century: ON *knifr* (OE *cnif*, now ME *knife*), ON *skor* (OE *scoru*, now ME *score*) (Crystal, 71).

Matthew Townsend notes an interesting development in the relationship between Old English and Old Norse: Old English absorption of Old Norse words for which there was already an Old English term; this was not a replacement, but the two words essentially existing side-

by-side. In Townsend's example, *earl* came to represent a particularly high-ranking nobleman, likely because the Scandinavian influence came from a position of power, and Danish jarls held a high rank in their own society. Whereas previously, the Old English *ealdormen* referred to a similarly prestigious noble of official, the Danish influence as rulers during the time of Cnut led an *earl* to be viewed as higher status. *Aldormen* continued to be ranking officials, and the word remains in use, but the status and exact meaning of the word changed.

It is difficult to explain why Old Norse words could replace existing Old English words, exist alongside them, or take on similar but not identical meanings. A leading cause was the geography of the Scandinavian invasions combined with the dialectal diversity in England during both the Old and Middle English periods. Many Old Norse words entered the English lexicon in the East and the North of England, where Danish settlement was strongest. But if a word came into favour there - possibly even pushing out an Old English word, but only in that dialect - the existing Old/Middle English word would likely survive in the South. Some Old Norse words absorbed in this fashion would then fall into disuse by Early Modern English, but the more enduring examples crept South and spread into other Middle English dialects. There is no standard for how or when these changes would happen, and so sometimes Old Norse words became the dominant (or only) form of a given word, sometimes they became synonyms of words with Old English roots, and sometimes 'layered' meanings for the two related terms developed, as in *earl/aldorman*.

Moving on from lexical influences, we can examine the diverse range of ways in which



Old Norse affected English, beginning with phonetics. Dialectally, the hard /sk/ sound became prevalent in the North, and even remains this way. The Scots dialect contains *kirk* for church, for example. The Northern English dialects continued to show other notable Norse influence into the Middle English period. In the Reeve's Tale, Geoffrey Chaucer records some Northern English men speaking in a lexicon distinct from that of their Southern compatriots. (As noted by Crystal, 165-7), Chaucer's Northerners use *fra* (which is from Old Norse) for from where the Southern characters use *fro*, likewise *ga* compared to *go*; *gif* for *if*, *whilk* for *which*. Another Northern, pseudo-dialectical Old Norse presence is in place names; villages such as 'Toft', or ending in *-toft*, *-thwaite*, *-thorpe* abound, specifically in the North of England and in the Scottish lowlands (Crystal, 67). Many of the dialectal differences between Northern English/Scots and Southern dialects do, of course, predate the Old Norse period of influence. All the same, Old Norse influences have remained strongest in the Northern dialects, and are often in use to the present day, even if they did not fully influence what became Standard English pronunciation.

Also noteworthy are the ways in which Old Norse changed English grammar. Some of English's most important modern features came from Old Norse. One such change is the *-s* plural ending (specifically of the present indicative of verbs). Old English always used *-eth* endings, such as *bebugeð* (surroundeth, *Beowulf*, 135). Again, dialectally, the Northern dialects picked up the Old Norse version, *surrounds*, first. *Surroundeth* and the like would have continued to be in use in the Southern dialects but the *-s* ending would catch on. The Middle English period was inconsistent, and the two options would come to exist side-by-side in the Southern regions, for example in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale*, "*liketh*" (III.50), and "*likes*"

(III.97). The *-eth* ending is more common in Chaucer, but by Shakespeare's time, the two were essentially interchangeable, until the *-eth* ending disappeared. Baugh also notes that *-ing* endings are descended from *-and*, *-end*, and *-ind* (the differences are dialectal) endings that came from Old Norse (103). These changes seem small, but affected forms we now use constantly in everyday life in Modern English.

Another undeniably huge Old Norse influence was the replacement of pronouns. Old English had three third-person plural pronouns: *hie*, *heom* and *heora* (ME *they*, *him* and *her*). *Peir* replaced *hie*, and *peim* and *peira* replaced *heom* and *heore* (at least as pertaining to the third person plural), leading to the eventual evolution of our Modern English forms. As Crystal writes, "pronouns do not change very often in the history of a language, and to see one set of forms replaced by another is truly noteworthy" (76). As with so many other Old Norse replacement forms, there are examples of the two existing side-by-side during the period of linguistic transition, but perhaps most notably, and early, in the remarkable *Ormulum* (written ~1200 in a Midlands dialect of Middle English). *Orm* (the self-titled author) uses "*pe33m [them]*" (Holt, 49) - the spelling is *Orm's* own unique choice), "*pe33 [they]*" (82), but then "*hemm*" (121), and "*heore*" (124), and so on without consistency. However, *Orm's* lack of distinction is not the point; rather, it provides us with an intriguing and early example of the two variant forms alongside one another. The change would stick; Chaucer, and later Caxton, use all the variants (Crystal, 76), but by the advent of Early Modern English, *her* and *hem* were no longer current, leaving us with only our modern forms.

# PRO ET

## PRO

Benjamin Hoy | Department of History

In 1999, the video game market in the United States captured more than 8 billion dollars in revenue, exceeding even the financial importance of Hollywood box office receipts in that year. Although video games are a relatively new invention, games in the broadest sense have been part of human life for hundreds if not thousands of years. Controversial game franchises, such as *Grand Theft Auto*, however, have encouraged people to begin to rethink the place of games in society and what relationship they have with older forms of storytelling. Are movies simply a visual sub-genre of literature? If so, are games simply an interactive, visual, and tactile subset?

On the most basic level, games and literature serve many of the same purposes in society. They provide people with an entertaining escape from their everyday lives, teach history, transmit cultural knowledge from adults to children, and provide a venue for people to engage with difficult issues in ways removed from their direct day-to-day lives. Both literature and games tell stories and use narrative structures.

At the same time, video games and literature, as they are traditionally conceived, seem to differ on a fundamental level in terms of the amount of interactivity and the visual/auditory/tactile nature each provides. Literature is consumed visually (reading) or auditorily (audio books) with the participant having little impact on the outcome of the experience. You can read faster or slower but the narrative is scripted, literally and figuratively. Video games instead are consumed with many senses at once and provide open-ended decisions. Visuals mix with audio and tactility as the players use a keyboard and mouse to navigate a world or an experience. In the case of virtual reality games, the player maintains a presence within the game world itself that responds to the movements of their body.

## Are video games

The divisions between games and literature that appear so clear from afar blur and disappear upon closer inspection. These divergences are matters of industry norms and expectations rather than absolute distinctions. “Choose your own adventure” novels, for example, provide the audience with significant amounts of choice, while many kids’ games (*Candyland*, *Snakes and Ladders*, etc.) provide little if any choice to the players. Moreover, the ways people interact with literature and games share more in common than it might first appear. Both literature and games rely on text and images (especially in the case of children’s books) to convey messages. Modern board games, like *Tales of Arabian Nights*, and computer games, like *Divinity: Original Sin II*, contain large amounts of text as part of the game experience, sometimes in excess of what might appear in a novel. This commonality has led literary theorists like Geoffrey Rockwell to argue that computer games “are the most popular form of fiction consumed through the computer.” The ways people consume the information may differ, but the borrowing of archetypes and narrative structures across media makes it hard to disentangle video games from literature.

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Geoffrey Rockwell, “Gore Galore: Literary Theory and Computer Games,” *Computers and the Humanities* 36, no. 3 (2002): 350.

Rockwell, 345.

# CONTRA

nes literature?

## CONTRA

Jon Bath | Department of Art and Art History  
Humanities & Fine Arts Digital Research Centre

If one is to argue that video games are literature, then the corollary should also hold true: literature is a game. Literature relies upon interaction with the reader/player in order to function; the plot of a novel does not progress unless you turn the page. These player interactions are governed by a defined ruleset (you will turn the pages in order) and an end condition (you will reach the end of the book). Readers of mystery novels, and books from *Tristram Shandy* to *House of Leaves*, have subverted these rules, but we all still accept that they are the rules.

However, if you were to announce that henceforth the primary means for studying literature is to treat it as a game there would be great outrage in the academy (as there indeed was when not dissimilar arguments arose around post-structuralism and reception theory in the 1980s). Treating literature as a game can be a useful exercise, but so are burpies, and I most definitely do not want to do burpies all day.

Labelling video games as literature provides a convenient point of access for scholars who have been trained in literary methods. It allows us to apply what we already know to a new form of media that many of us find very exciting. It also allows us to justify our work to conservative colleagues, and our students to justify their studies to their parents, by placing games in a frame of reference that has already been accepted as a legitimate form of study. Movies and graphic novels have passed through similar gates on their journey towards academic acceptance.

The problem is that if you focus on literary studies of video games you end up only studying literary video games. Reams (and megabytes) have been written about games, such as *Dear Esther*, *Gone Home*, *The Last of Us*, and

*Mass Effect*, which contain strongly authored narratives, and whose ultimate end condition seems to be reaching the conclusion of this narrative. We have to explore the island/house/wasteland/outer space instead of turning pages, but the story has already been laid out for us. As such, they are ripe for literary interpretations.

I have spent an embarrassing amount of time fixing my socks and searching for sticks in *The Long Dark*. Although the game starts with a generally depressing quote about the unlikelihood of survival in the wilderness, it has no narrative (or at least it didn't until recently) except for the one that I, as a player, create. There isn't even a villain, except for the cold, hunger, and perhaps my own impatience. I could spend days analysing various aspects of the game, from the beauty of its Northern Lights to the immersive shift in controls as you near death, but not its literariness, except perhaps for how it enables my own. Similarly, how would you discuss the story of *Minecraft*, or intentionality in the community-created chaos that is *GTA Online*? And what the heck is the literary critic supposed to say about *QWOP*?

There is nothing to be gained by classifying video games as literature except attempting to shortcut their path to recognition as objects worthy of study. Dare I say, as an art form. As such, it strikes me as evidence of our very insecurity as scholars. When confronted by the new, we seek shelter in the familiar instead of admitting our own ignorance. In so doing we risk setting up a canon of video games that hews to those of other media forms. The exciting thing about games for many of us who study them is not just how they are the same as books, or movies, or conceptual art, but also how they are different. We need to ensure our work reflects that difference.

# NEO-LUDDITE

Anonymous

My grandma told me that  
The world is always changing:  
They put a chip inside my wrist and said,  
“You won’t need to sleep.”  
Everybody works all night, so now  
I have to charge it—  
When I look in the corner where my bed used to be  
I sometimes think I miss dreams.

Manhandling me, gripping my arms,  
They drag me to a station—  
It’s a cage, they call it “station”—  
Tell me to stand inside.  
I don’t have to move or eat:  
There’s wires and motors and no room to breathe.  
It’s better for us all because it’s fast and no pollution—  
I’ve held off long enough and  
Everyone else uses them—

My grandma told me that  
The world is always changing  
So when they strap me in my to  
I don’t put up a fight.





# ROSES AND CANDLES

Aldeneil C. Espanola Jr.

*Excerpted from “Roses and Candles”, available online: [goo.gl/ejeE9B](https://goo.gl/ejeE9B)*

## Chapter 6

Look at the way your eyes brightened: they were like the moon in a clear night sky. Your soul shined, illuminating the globes that many times looked straight into my heart.

The way your mouth curved in genuine laughter—urging me on to voice more comedic sass, in hopes of carving your smile in my memory to last me a lifetime.

They were the words that came out of your lips: so encouraging, thirsty for adventure and so, so heart-racingly beautiful.

You were a one-of-a-kind collectible, Max.

## Chapter 14

You promised to take me on an adventure that was waiting in the concrete jungle.

We walked down rows of tall structures standing side by side. Bright lights flickered in the darkness of the path that we strolled on.

“Have you ever wondered what’s on the other side of a black hole? I mean, there must be an end if there is a start, right?”

I smiled; I missed that. If you were the reason for starting my heartbeats, then I didn’t want an end in our story.

Out of the countless twinkles that passed through my vision, you shined the brightest, Max.

## Chapter 28

You brought me to the land of the explorable.

We walked through the shade of tall verdant trees, filled with wisdom and wistfulness, avoiding the bright heat of the sun.

We trekked through hills and mountains of wonder and amazement beneath the clouded blue sky.

We strolled beside rivers of flowing life and vigor underneath the peach hue of the sunset.

You opened my heart and freed the melody that longed to echo through the starry night sky.

Max, we were two dreamers, who drank the blood of pirates, on the hunt for all the treasure the world could ever offer.

It seemed like you finally found one meant for you.

# CULTURAL EVENT: VIDEO GAMES LIVE

## **In Medias Res attends... *Video Games Live*!**

This semester the editorial board of *In Medias Res* had the opportunity to attend a live symphony concert of video games music at TCU Place. This was a well-attended event where we had fun listening to game soundtracks performed and seeing people's varied-in-intensity Cosplay. If you're into either gaming or the symphony, we recommend checking the concert out when it's next in town!

## **How well did Video Games Live demonstrate the artistic value of video games?**

"The show was quite successful. I think the artistry of video games is overlooked, sometimes in terms of the animation but especially in terms of the music. And yet, the music behind many of these games is extremely important. For instance, songs like the Mario Bros theme song and the Pokémon theme song are almost universally recognizable in our society, and I am sure that everyone in the audience felt connected to those performances due to their own experiences with those games."

~ Emily M.

"The host made one comment that stuck out to me: he said video game music affects people differently than music from a favourite TV show or movie because it becomes very personal—it's the soundtrack to *you* and your efforts as a character." ~ Hannah

"The event has not convinced me of the artistic value of video games, but only because it focused fairly specifically on one aspect of these games: the music. The music certainly had artistic merit; indeed, more than I expected, as it was more complex and interesting than a short, repetitive, and catchy motif, which is what I think of when I think of video game music." ~ Patrick



## **How does the event celebrate the qualities and culture of video games without playing them?**

“The event provided an impressive music experience, bringing focus to an element that I suspect is not usually the subject of attention when people consider video games. The use of the screen also displayed the artistic efforts put into the games and showed some of the plot line, allowing people to experience the excitement that might come along with playing the game even when you are just watching.”

~ Emily K.

“One of the coolest parts about being at the show was witnessing all the crowd interaction. I could tell when crowd favourites were announced, and it was clear that the majority of audience members were really passionate about video games. It’s very cool how video games, which many people play alone, can create such a community. I also really enjoyed the video clips from the games and other visual aspects of the show, as I felt that it really connected the concert to the experience of playing the games. I was also really impressed with how well the live music was matched up with the videos!” ~ Emily M.

“The music was quite spectacular, however, the appeal of solving puzzles and challenges, which is part of many games, was completely absent. The ‘gaming’ part of video games was not celebrated.”

~ Patrick

## **How accessible was the event to non-gamers?**

“The event was made more accessible for everyone by the projection of video game clips onto the screen so that even if you had never played the game you would be able to surmise what it could be about.” ~ Emily K.

“As someone who is not familiar with video games, I was a little out of the loop on a lot of the jokes and didn’t recognize a good portion of the songs. However, the show itself was still enjoyable. The performers engaged the audience well and the music was excellent. I was also able to appreciate the enthusiasm of the audience members who were more familiar with video games and I ended up still having a great time!” ~ Emily M.

“My gaming experience is basically limited to the days of NES. I divided my time between appreciating the music and thinking, ‘Wow, games sure are fancy these days!’” ~ Hannah

# THE REMEDY OF BOOKSTORES

Tamara Brunwald

There is a certain calming sensation that everyone feels when they walk into a bookstore.

It is that feeling of ease that is difficult to put your finger on. I think it's because there's an overwhelming sense of completeness: a whole building filled with thousands of lifetimes wrapped up in neat packages, not missing a thing.

We have no control over these stories. Sometimes we have no control over our own.

But in a bookstore, when reading these stories, we have power. Power to turn the page.

To start a new chapter. To keep staring at the same sentence, the dried ink of a moment in time, until we memorize it. Or if we so choose, the power to start a new story entirely.

Books are like people. Some are coated in a hard cover, others soft. Some are filled with art, beauty and poetry. Others are filled with struggles and sorrows you never would have known by picking it up and flipping through its pages. Some are filled with dog-eared corners marking the best parts, others have tear-stained pages with crinkled edges.

The remedy of bookstores is that we feel a sense of familiarity with each book we glance at, in every aisle we pass by. We both share the feeling of wanting to be chosen.

Because each person is just a book. A story.

Waiting to be read.



# WRITER IN RESIDENCE

Delane Just

The city of Saskatoon is blessed with its very own Writer in Residence program at the public library. This program gives writers in the community someone to talk to about all things writing--from working on that first draft to questions about publishing. I met with the library's 37th Writer in Residence, Katherine Lawrence, who holds an MFA in Creative Writing from our very own University of Saskatchewan. Katherine Lawrence is author to 3 collections of poetry as well as her young adult novel *Stay*.

As a poet and writer myself, I was very excited to meet with Katherine and jumped at the opportunity to do so. I'll admit after hearing Katherine's speech at this year's Write North I was a little starstruck. Nethertheless, Katherine was incredibly friendly and make me feel comfortable to share my work with her. Her experience in writing was clear as her feedback was very intuitive and fit for what I was looking for. When speaking with Katherine about my work, she noted some of the techniques I used in my piece. It was an amazing experience to talk with someone who truly understands the craft of writing and could point out what I was doing well, as well as what I was doing poorly.

When I asked Katherine about her favourite part of the program, she told me that she loved meeting passionate writers of all ages. She told me that while part of this program was for her to pass on her knowledge to others, she also felt that she learned so many new things herself along the way. I then asked what the most difficult part was, to which she jokingly responded: keeping up with all the emails.

Sometimes it can be difficult to find another writer to talk to, especially when you are shy like myself. I believe I found something truly valuable from my talk with Katherine Lawrence, beyond simply feedback. I found someone to talk to about something I loved. Therefore, I believe the Writer in Residence program is perfect for anyone who just loves to talk about writing.

# EUCHARIST, REMEMBRANCE, AND WAR IN THE POETRY OF T.S. ELIOT

Patrick Malone

What is the point of remembering past wars? The speaker of T.S. Eliot's "Gerontion," published in *Poems, 1920* shortly after the First World War, would seem to argue that there is little point. He begins by remembering the wars of the past; he "was neither at the hot gates / Nor fought in the war rain."<sup>1</sup> However, his absence at Thermopylae does not mean that this distant war has no relevance to him. He remembers it almost as the beginning of a long history of violence and decay, of which he is the inheritor. He did not fight, but he knows and was shaped by that fighting.

There is difficulty, however, in knowing history, which has "many cunning passages, contrived corridors,"<sup>2</sup> and it "deceives with whispering ambitions"<sup>3</sup> and "guides us by vanities."<sup>4</sup> The direction of history and the way one event leads to another cannot be uncovered by logic, but only understood at the wrong moment, either "too late"<sup>5</sup> when that anticipated understanding is no longer believed in or "too soon"<sup>6</sup> before it can be understood. To what does all this history lead? Certainly not "progress," whatever that may be. There is no guarantee that humanity is trending onward and upward. Indeed, for Gerontion, history itself is cyclical; people are caught in the endless repetition of constellations revolving through the sky, in the endless repetition of wars and violence. Even if one forgets an event, history will offer a reminder of it sooner or later.

Instead, the speaker's house is "decayed,"<sup>7</sup> "draughty,"<sup>8</sup> and "rented."<sup>9</sup> The culture and society that are the issue of history have torn themselves apart in war, and while there may still be a structure left, it is not a structure in which to have any faith. Dante and Shakespeare, despite the poet's reliance on them, are not capable of saving their own continent from becoming a shell of itself. Remembering violence does not prevent it, but neither does remembering the great artistic heritage.

Now, there could be meaning to had; Gerontion refers suspiciously to "Christ the tiger" who comes in response to the call for a sign.<sup>10</sup> However, "signs are taken for wonders."<sup>11</sup> Signs are not recognized because they are not the marvels and wonders the askers expect, and indeed, Christ is not the expected sign, not just because He was "unable to speak a word, instead of overawing the askers,"<sup>12</sup> but because He came "to be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk."<sup>13</sup> Like the disciples who follow Christ when he performs miracles but leave when told that to achieve eternal life they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, Gerontion is among those who ask for a sign but reject the sign they receive, even though Peter understands that there is nowhere else that they can go. And so, instead of receiving the Eucharist, Gerontion is devoured by the tiger. He wonders what forgiveness is possible after this history of sin, but, when seeing the forgiveness that is offered in the Passion and

1 Eliot, T.S. "Gerontion." *The Complete Poems & Plays*, Faber & Faber, 2004, 38-9. Lines 3-4.

2 *Ibid*, 34.

3 *Ibid*, 35.

4 *Ibid*, 36.

5 *Ibid*, 39.

6 *Ibid*, 41.

7 *Ibid*, 7.

8 *Ibid*, 31.

9 *Ibid*, 51.

10 *Ibid*, 20.

11 *Ibid*, 17.

12 *Ibid*, 18.

13 *Ibid*, 22.

in which he can partake in the Eucharist, rejects it and must instead face justice and wrath.

“So what,” Gerontion seems to be asking, “if we remember the past wars?” The war to end all wars has just ended, but despite the technological leaps enabling new types of slaughter, such as chemical weapons and the use of aircraft and tanks, this violence is neither new to the speaker, nor will it be final; this violence will be renewed in a couple decades. Indeed, the roots of the upcoming conflict are inadvertently anticipated in the speaker’s apparent disdain for the Jew who owns the house. The cycle continues. Gerontion remembers all, but is sterile and powerless to generate something new.

And yet, the fact that one must eat the tiger or be eaten by it points to Eliot’s later *Four Quartets*, in which one faces “the choice of pyre or pyre.”<sup>14</sup> “Little Gidding,” which depicts the Second World War (which would seem to confirm the despairing cycles of “Gerontion”) has genuine hope that the cycle of fire purifies, and that one can learn to see meaning in the cycle by recognizing patterns and “timeless moments.”<sup>15</sup> In the choice of pyre or pyre, one chooses the fire of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost or the fire of the German bomber. Fire burns away sin and all sinful attachments, preparing it for union with God and the suffering of Christ, or is the fire of Hell. The speaker of “Little Gidding” faces the same dilemma that Gerontion did, but chooses differently. Now, “this dripping blood [is] our only drink / The bloody flesh our only food,” though Gerontion earlier rejected that same food, the Eucharist, which is consumed in memory of Christ, and is a participation in His Passion.<sup>16</sup>

What is different? In many ways, nothing; the choice is the same, the violence has returned, and the cycle of time will ensure that it will return again. However, in the later poem, there is faith in history’s intelligibility, that it can be understood as bearing meaning, even though it may take repetition to recognize that meaning. With age, according to Eliot, one sees that the past is no “mere sequence” but an accumulation of significance. Most significantly, Eliot’s speakers differ in their willingness to partake in the central ritual of remembrance of Western culture, the Eucharist, which remembers the ultimate violence, decide, and that this violence was not final, as Christ rose again. The speakers of the *Four Quartets* see suffering as potentially redemptive, as burning away all that separates one from God and making one more detached from distractions, while entering into the apophatic darkness where one is deprived of all sense, knowledge, and even being. Because violence is no longer repetitive meaninglessness, these speakers can have hope.

This is a very different type of remembering than is usually meant when we speak of remembering our soldiers. We usually take this to mean that we honour their sacrifice, and ensure that it was not in vain by working to ensure that others need not make that same sacrifice again. For Eliot, remembering violence takes on salvific significance. The remembrance of the Eucharist offers not just individual, but communal assurance that violence need not be pointless, but can be overcome, and allows participation in that hope, even as that cycle of violence seems more than ever to control history. The *Four Quartets* repudiate the despair of “Gerontion,” even as it seems vindicated.

14 Eliot, T.S. “Little Gidding.” *The Complete Poems & Plays*, Faber & Faber, 2004, 191-8. Lines 208.

15 *Ibid*, 237.

16 Eliot, T.S. “East Coker” *The Complete Poems & Plays*, Faber & Faber, 2004, 177-83. Lines 169-70.

# SKINS: INDIGENOUS GAME WORKSHOPS

Anonymously reviewed

*Skins* is a series of media-development workshops sponsored by the Concordia University-based Initiative for Indigenous Futures. Thus far, five video games have been produced by indigenous students through short workshops aimed at “[teaching] Indigenous youth how to adapt stories from their community into experimental digital media... to encourage our youth to envision themselves in the future while drawing from their heritage.”<sup>1</sup> These five games are freely available for download through the Initiative for Indigenous Futures website.

*Skins 1.0: Otsi: Rise of the Kanien'keha:ka Legends* was the first game to be developed, created in 2008-2009 at Kahnawake Survival School in Quebec. It features an Iroquois protagonist who tries to defeat a mythical creature, the Flying Head. Immediately I was struck by how effective the format of a video game is for presenting traditional storytelling in immersive new ways. Despite the simple gameplay I was involved in the character's world and impressed with what the creators had accomplished. In 2011, *Skins 2.0: Skahìòn:hati: Legend of the Stone Giant* was developed in Montreal, and in the following year student creators from the first two workshops combined their efforts to create a more complex game. *Skins 3.0: Skahìòn:hati: Rise of the Kanien'kehá:ka Legends* uses the plots and worlds from both the first games and features more complex gameplay and a multi-level story. I had trouble with this game being glitchy as my character became able to fly after too much jumping and then got stuck in the sky... but I had fun getting through the levels and exploring the world.

In 2013 *Skins 4.0: Ienién:te and the Peacemaker's Wampum* was created. This is a completely different creation from those of the previous workshops. The narrative of this game

was the most entertaining to me and it takes place in a modern setting. I felt like the game itself had an old-school 1990s vibe that was nostalgic and helped mitigate the simplicity of the graphics and controls. Here you play as the protagonist Ienién:te who has recently graduated university with an archaeology degree and has to defeat evil archaeologists who are stealing traditional artifacts. I laughed at the line, ““I knew it! I knew there was a secret society of archaeologists!” This game had a boss level to beat at the end.

Lastly *Skins 5.0: He Ao Hou* again represented a completely new approach and subject from those of the previous workshops. This game was apparently developed in only three weeks in Honolulu in 2017. It is set in a science-fiction future that mixes space canoes, indigenous Hawaiian stories, and traditional cultural elements. The experience of playing this game was a mix of positive and negative as the click-based navigation was tedious, but the story was the most interesting and complex to me, and it was the hardest game for me to solve.

Given the short time frame participants have in these workshops to learn the technical skills necessary to create the games and then go through the process of development, the games are significant achievements. However, they are necessarily simplistic in plot, complexity, and appearance so the value as games lies in their unique approaches and as demonstration of what can be accomplished. I think these games would be valuable as teaching tools for students at multiple grade levels. The games themselves would appeal to kids as a way and could serve as starting-points to talk about current issues like diverse and unequal representation in the media. However, the curriculum for creating the games is also made available online so students could approach them from a technical standpoint and theoretically try to imagine or create their own games. Overall, these workshops are a really unique initiative and I will be interested to see what *Skins* continues to produce in the future.

1 “Workshops: Bringing Aboriginal Storytelling to Experimental Digital Media,” Initiative for Indigenous Futures, <http://abtec.org/iif/workshops/>.



# THE LONG DARK

Reviewed by Trent Klassen

If I could describe this game in one world, it would be “immersive”. *The Long Dark* is a first-person survival game created by Canadian game studio Hinterland Games. It centers on Will Mackenzie and Astrid Greenwood as they attempt to survive the quiet apocalypse. A mysterious electromagnetic storm in the Canadian wilderness has cut off all communication and electronic equipment, and you must balance factors of body heat, hunger, thirst, and exhaustion in order to survive.

I found this game in the beginning of the early access phase. While many of its features were unrefined and lacking in depth, the beauty and mystery of the game beckoned me to go further and further. My first game lasted only a few in-game hours as I scrounged for supplies and was promptly devoured by a wolf. I got better and better until I found I was able to survive a night or two, but always met my end at the hands of frostbite or starvation. This game kicked me down over and over again, but always left me coming back for more. Over the many months of gameplay, they released new items, regions, and designs that really gave the game a big boost.

The game was finally finished and released in August 2017. In this they released the finishing touches to the survival mode, as well as Season One of the story mode. It begins the player’s part of the story with a tutorial section that acquaints the user with the base mechanics while still letting them figure things out for themselves. It is paced well and develops naturally as one might experience during an actual survival nightmare. The story likewise is very methodically paced. Unlike other adventure games like *Fallout 4* or *GTA*, the story scenes are not really meant to be skipped by the player. The challenges are not meant to be sped through. Each challenge should be met with thought and patience as you wait, watch, and learn your way through the world.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

tānisi Danielle Kehler ē-isiihkāsoyān niya nēhiyaw iskwêw tānitē kawāhkatosihk niya. Hello and how are you? My name is Danielle Kehler and I am a Cree woman from Kawacatoose First Nations. I am currently an Arts and Science student at the University of Saskatchewan intending to attain a business degree through the Edwards School of Business.

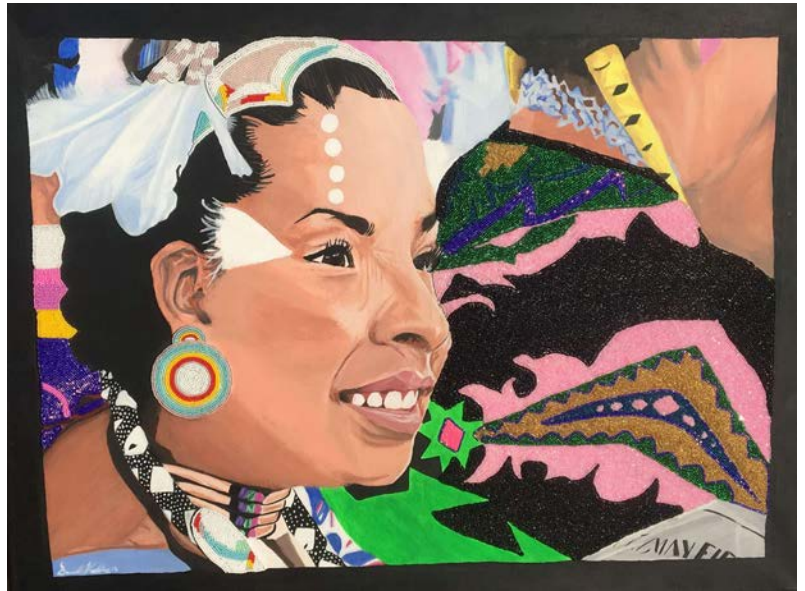
I have been painting and creating art for most of my life. Art has given me a purpose, as through my art I can let my thoughts and voice be heard. I am very connected to my culture and its traditions, thus it has a big impact on my work as an artist. The connection to my culture has been instrumental for me becoming a spiritual person. Practicing and believing in my traditions has led me to trust in myself in attempting to modernize my interpretation of these traditions, which have survived throughout generations of my ancestors.

My style is mixed media. I paint my canvases and then I do bead work on top of the painting. I try to capture the essence of Indigenous culture, like the exquisiteness and detail that goes into making regalia for the different types of powwow dancers. Or the beauty in the many traditions we have and the stories that are told to one generation after another through the elders and oral traditions. These tell us where we come from and why we do the things we do. I feel these influences are so important and I try to incorporate their teachings into my work.

I want my art to help break through barriers such as stereotypes and prejudices to expose the true beauty of Indigenous culture. I desire to showcase the triumphs and resilience of Indigenous Peoples.



MEDICINE WOMAN



RELATED TO EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN



CONTRASTING SPIRITS

ART BY DANIELLE KEHLER





AFFECTION | AJAYPAL SINGH KAHLOH

## POSTCARD STORY

"A postcard story is a condensed piece of storytelling in no more than 250 words. Use drama, poetry, humour, and dialogue to write one. Anything goes. There are no restrictions except the word limit. Stretch yourself by writing short." *Guy Vanderhague*

### Recipe for Happiness

The Art Form of Smoking Borrowed Happiness.

Step 1: Gather materials and the courage needed.

Step 2: Grind happiness into small pieces of joy and revel in the choices you have made as a human being.

Step 3: Look for a strong piece of paper and make an improvised filter. Ask yourself, "What am I doing with my life?"

Step 4: Tuck happiness, fold, and roll. Don't forget to twist and lock the whole.

Step 5: (optional) For an extra seal of good luck, hold one end, put your happiness in your mouth, wrap your lips on the end held, and pull out.

Step 6: Light, Blaze and Enjoy.



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ST. THOMAS MORE COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

By *Aldeneil C. Espanola Jr*