

# Society PAGES

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**morrin**

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IMAGINATION FESTIVAL 2022: MEMOIRS PANEL

With authors Eternity Martis & Billy-Ray Belcourt and host Raquel Fletcher

Photo credit: Jeanne Lebossé-Gautron

## Letter from the President

### Gina Farnell



Everything is relative to something else. The Literary and Historical Society of Quebec boasts almost 200 years of history. Notwithstanding Indigenous history, which traces back to time immemorial, only a few centuries of built environment is noticeable in North America. Yet, compared to other parts of the world, our buildings and artwork seem like they were made just yesterday. On a recent trip abroad, I found it humbling to stand in front of a 1000-year-old piece of pottery and to admire the work of the masters of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, made at a time when the idea of “Canada” was limited to a few shaky wooden trading posts. In our own humble way, the LHSQ strives to be a witness of the best of the past while being very present in our community today as we plan for the future.

Summer is here, and with it comes a change of pace. Hopefully we can all take the time to be thankful for nature’s awakening after months of rest under snow and ice and our slow but increasing return to gatherings among friends and strangers alike. We too should awaken to all that is offered to us.

The Morrin Centre is happy to welcome Olivier Bilodeau as the new Assistant Executive Director. Olivier, Barry McCullough, and the rest of the Morrin Centre staff are working hard at preparing activities and events to be held both within and outside the Centre’s walls. May we all accept their invitation to come and enjoy cultural gatherings and visits to our Morrin Centre. The Library has been very active, with the Book Acquisitions Committee continually adding excellent new titles from a variety of literary genres to our collection for LHSQ members to enjoy year-round.

This summer, drop by the Morrin Centre and invite family and friends to enjoy its uniqueness. Then go back home to your favourite spot under the shade with a refreshing beverage in one hand and a good book in the other.

Wishing you all a fun-filled, restful, and pleasant summer.



## From the Executive Director

### Barry McCullough

Spring has been an incredibly exciting time as we returned to in-person events with our 13<sup>th</sup> annual Imagination Writers’ Festival. Over six days in early April, the Centre was host to more than two-dozen authors from all across Canada. The Morrin Centre team was overjoyed to hold Imagination in-person for the first time since 2019. I would like to thank everyone involved in making this event such a success including staff, volunteers, moderators, and, of course, the writers. It takes dozens of people to pull off a successful festival, and we greatly appreciate everyone’s contributions.

Our next major event will be *Arts Alive! 2022*, which will take place August 19 and 20 outside the Morrin Centre on the Chaussée des Écossais, weather permitting of course. As always, our *Arts Alive* festival will bring an exhilarating mix of music, artisanry, and more to our community. The lineup is yet to be announced, but be sure to follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our newsletter to stay up-to-date on *Arts Alive* and all of our upcoming activities and services.

As summer is nearly upon us, the Centre is gearing up for a busy one with guided tours. Like many organizations of our size, we are not immune to the current labour shortages being felt across the country. The Morrin Centre is still looking for at least two summer tour guides to help us carry out our mission to share the wonderful heritage and history of our site and institution. Moreover, guided tours are an important part of the Centre’s self-generated revenue and the proceeds from them cover a significant part of our programming and operating expenses. Please spread the word among your contacts about this incredibly rewarding summer work opportunity, which could turn into a part-time position in the fall and winter. Those interested should send their CVs to [jobs@morrin.org](mailto:jobs@morrin.org).

Wishing you all a wonderful summer.

## Annual Society Pages Poetry Contest: 2022 Winners

### Society Pages Poetry Contest



In honour of National Poetry Month this past April, the Morrin Centre held its third annual *Society Pages Poetry Contest*. Again, the contest generated an immense amount of interest, with submissions from the Quebec City region as well as from further afield. We were delighted with the number of high-quality entries that we received, which made selecting a winner and the finalists difficult.

Congratulations to Frank Beltrano, who won the contest with his marvelous poem “We Qi Gong Practitioners”! We also selected three honourable mentions, which are included here: “For even now she is dreaming in colour” by Donald A. Landes, “Ode to Cat” by Amy Bilodeau, and “My Past” by Eva Jelambi.

Thank you to everyone who participated. We hope that you enjoy reading these poems as much as we did!

### We Qi Gong Practitioners

By Frank Beltrano

My wife says I say no to everything.  
We spat when I say no to that.

We swim in an ocean of E.M.F.'s.  
Electromagnetic frequencies are drowning us.

Perhaps soon, A.I. will read the motion  
of our bodies while we do Qi Gong

and robots will pull our strings.  
Perhaps it is already happening.

I have been reading *Us Conductors*  
a book that might as well be about trains.

It is, in fact, a song, verse and refrain  
beautiful sounds, otherwise, so many lies

about the life of Lev Sergeyvich Thermen  
inventor of the theremin

spy, genius, puppet, lover, liar.  
If we are to believe this licentious book

Thermen heard, was haunted by, the voice not  
the look, of Clara, who may or may not have been.

It is a sin, to lie, to muddy the truth.  
I say no to the show that veers away from reality

and yet we practitioners shape balls of non-existent  
energy, draw them to us, push them away

slowly dancing in the E.M.F.'s  
perhaps for the amusement of A.I.

## For even now she is dreaming in colour

By Donald A. Landes

In the mirror the canvas sees nothing but white emptiness,  
And yet she dreams in colour.  
Metastable fullness,  
At once everything and nothing in wonderful fusion.

The artist (is it you?) stands before her,  
Wanting nothing more than to explore those dreams.  
Infinite possibilities,  
Discovering and inventing in inextricable proportions.

You paint her yellow—  
She comes out toward you, radiating.  
Iridescent sunbeams,  
Caressing the gaze of all who warm themselves below.

You paint her red—  
She goes on the attack, precipitating.  
Irrepressible presence,  
Springing forth like a cat on the prowl.

You paint her green—  
She clings to you like a damp coolness, insinuating.  
Immaterial atmosphere,  
Sliding across your skin like springtime dew.

You paint her blue—  
She slinks into the background, deflecting.  
Impetuous withdrawal,  
Escaping by a step with every move you make.

You paint her black—  
She falls into the silence of the night, sleeping.  
Incalculable silence,  
Filling you with the noise that makes no sound.

You paint her white—  
She laughs at your irony with trepidation, hesitating.  
Inconsolable absence,  
Reorienting incessantly an inexhaustible richness.

You paint her all the colours you have,  
And still she says nothing and everything.  
You paint all the things you see,  
And still she somehow makes places for them.

You name her, she does not protest,  
For she knows more than you did,  
And she says more than you ever gave her.  
Are you, the artist, still listening?

You paint all the things you love,  
And she holds them for you as they were,  
As you go off, perhaps never to return.  
Are you, the artist, still alive?

You sign her, and it tickles her,  
For she belongs to the world you leave behind.

You can no longer protect her,  
You could never control her,  
For she bears you forward to new worlds.

But they were there in her white dreams,  
In her incorporeal fullness.

So, whatever you do, paint her.

For even now she is dreaming in colour,  
Only you, the artist, can wake her,  
So that she might invent you.

Whatever you do, paint her.



*Abstract Landscape #2 (2020) by Donald A. Landes. Watercolour.*

## Ode to Cat

By Amy Bilodeau

Silent is the look  
of love in a languid squeeze  
of slanted green eyes

Sun beams on white fur  
tail curled over pert pink nose  
a feline croissant

A paw fans out and  
extends like pranayama  
a yoga master

Coolly observe wreck  
toe beans tip over blue vase  
scientist at work

Slits open slowly  
ears perk forward, twitching for  
the drop of kibble.

## My Past

By Eva Jelambi

My past is a scratched line  
Of misspelled words:  
An ugly scar marring the paper  
Below rewritten thoughts.  
And it has left a sunken mark  
To last as long as I can see,  
While other fresh blank pages beg  
For poetry to heal them.

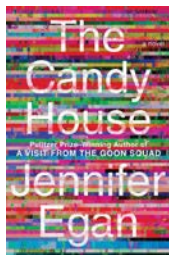
Some scratched lines conceal  
A verse that did not rhyme.  
Some did not tune with a soul carved  
Of ink, paper, and words.  
Each one is a reminder  
Of how far I have come,  
Of who I was, and who I am,  
While I write on who I will become.

# | Library Pages

## New Aquisitions

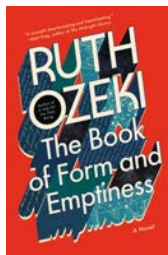
Here are some of the new titles in our library collection.

Books with an \* are also available on OverDrive.



*The Candy House*

Jennifer Egan  
Fiction  
E28 2022



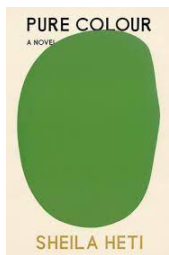
*The Book of Form and Emptiness\**

Ruth Ozeki  
Fiction  
O99 2021



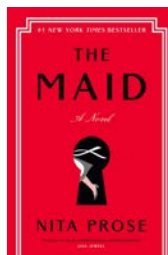
*all about love: new visions*

bell hooks  
Essays  
306.7 H781



*Pure Colour*

Sheila Heti  
Fiction  
H589 2022



*The Maid*

Nita Prose  
Fiction  
P966 2022



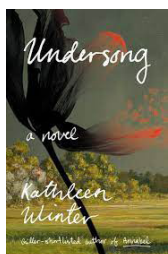
*Secrets of the Sprakkar*

Elizabeth Reid  
Non-Fiction  
305.42 R354



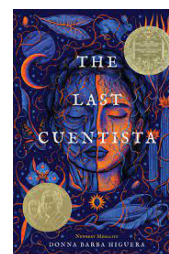
*Moon Witch, Spider King\**

Marlon James  
Fiction  
J28 2022



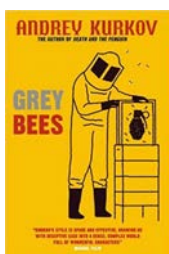
*Undersong*

Kathleen Winter  
Fiction  
W785 2021



*The Last Cuentista*

Donna Barba Higuera  
Young Adult  
Coming soon!



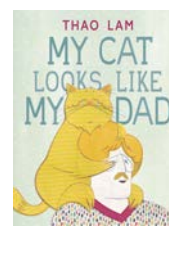
*Grey Bees\**

Andrey Kurkov  
Fiction  
K96 2018



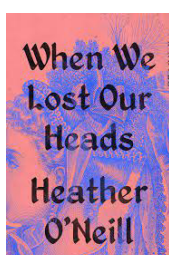
*Burning Questions\**

Margaret Atwood  
Essays  
819.42 A887



*My Cat Looks Like My Dad*

Thao Lam  
Junior Picture  
JP LAM 2019



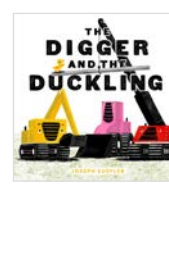
*When We Lost Our Heads\**

Heather O'Neill  
Fiction  
O58 2022



*The Dusty Bookcase\**

Brian Busby  
Non-Fiction  
810.9 B976



*The Digger and the Duckling*

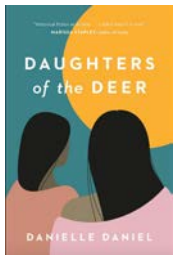
Joseph Kuefler  
Junior Picture  
JP KUE 2022



# What's New on OverDrive

Here are some of the new e-book and audiobook titles now available. Log in to the Morrin Centre's OverDrive system at [morrin.overdrive.com](http://morrin.overdrive.com) with your membership card to check out our latest acquisitions.

Books with an \* are also available as a physical copy in the Library.



## *Daughters of the Deer*

Danielle Daniel  
Fiction



## *The Diamond Eye*\*

Kate Quinn  
Fiction



## *It Starts with Fruit*

Jordan Champagne  
Cookbook



## *Sparring Partners*

John Grisham  
Fiction



## *This Savage Song*

Victoria Schwab  
YA



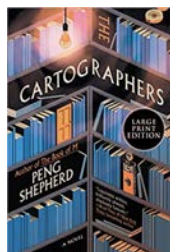
## *In the Margins: On the Pleasures of Reading and Writing*

Elena Ferrante  
Essays



## *Book Lovers*

Emily Henry  
Fiction



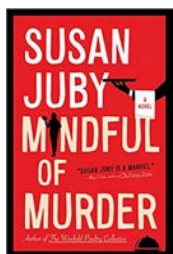
## *The Cartographers*

Pen Shepherd  
Fiction



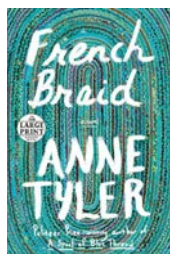
## *Run Towards the Danger*\*

Sarah Polley  
Memoir



## *Mindful of Murder*

Susan Juby  
Fiction



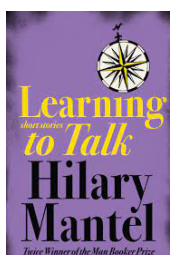
## *French Braid*\*

Anne Tyler  
Fiction



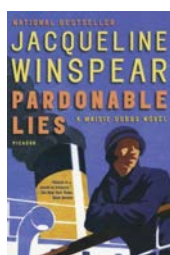
## *Hello, Molly!*

Molly Shannon  
Memoir



## *Learning to Talk*

Hilary Mantel  
Short Stories



## *Pardonable Lies*

Jacqueline Winspear  
Fiction



## *You Can Read*

Helaine Becker &  
Mark Hoffmann  
Junior Picture



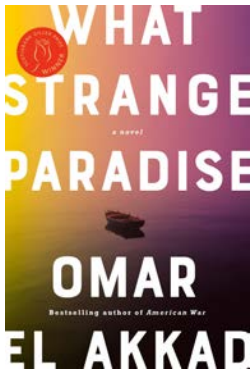
Read-Along

## Book Reviews

### *What Strange Paradise*

by Omar El Akkad

Book review by Samreen Ahsan



The winner of the 2021 Scotiabank Giller Prize and a 2022 CBC Reads Finalist, *What Strange Paradise* is a story about a nine-year-old Syrian boy, Amir, who wakes up from a shipwreck. At the very beginning, the reader is taken back in time to the news that made headlines in 2015—the image of the body of the two-

year-old Syrian boy washed ashore.

*“Today you are the only boy in the world and tomorrow it will be as though you never existed.”* (231)

The book is divided into alternating chapters, “before” and “after” the shipwreck, and Amir’s tumultuous journey in between, a very thought-provoking approach to reflect upon our own lives before death and the life after.

Amir Utu, a Syrian boy who migrated to a small town in Egypt with his mother, stepfather, and stepbrother, starts his life afresh. The initial chapters of the novel show Amir’s family crisis and his reasons for following his stepfather, who secretly disowns his family and journeys to a new place, which he assumes could prove to be a paradise. This makes readers question what exactly a paradise is, as no one has seen or experienced it. Often, what we consider or fantasize does not seem true.

In alternate chapters, when Amir’s boat reaches the shore on an island, the news of a shipwreck with only one survivor spreads like wildfire. Amid the chaos, a teenage girl named Vänna notices Amir and hides him in her house. She dodges the guards and military, provides food and shelter to Amir, and shows the kindness that perhaps only children can show. They

are strangers to each other, with no knowledge of each other’s language, and yet the bond they create, solely based on humanity, is beautiful.

Readers are given a chance to reflect upon their own lives, as one meets people like Umm Ibrahim, always kind no matter what the surroundings are; Mohamed, who draws opportunity even from someone’s death; Maher, who reads the world like a book but chooses to remain a silent character; Vänna, an unbiased person, whose kindness is not measured by her culture, language, or background; and Colonel Kethros, an authoritative man who has the power to bring change and yet remains quiet and watches people’s misery, just like powerful countries that witness injustice and yet choose to stay silent.

In *What Strange Paradise*, readers are left to ponder that there are two types of people we meet in our lives: those who seek opportunity in everything and others who show kindness in dire times. Which type are we?

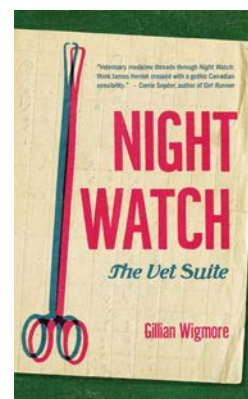
A thought-provoking and tragic journey of life and death and the tales in between.

*What Strange Paradise* (McClelland & Stewart, 2021). \*Also on OverDrive

### *Night Watch: The Vet Suite*

by Gillian Wigmore

Book review by Susan Saul



*Night Watch: The Vet Suite* is a set of three novellas that draws on author Gillian Wigmore’s experiences growing up as the child of a veterinarian. Although it is billed as narrating the life of a veterinarian, in truth it is about human relationships, the demands of the job, and the stresses that play out in the

background. This is not a book aimed solely at animal lovers, but rather a reflection on life decisions—paths taken, and choices made or not made.

The first story follows Ramona, from sporadic encounters that ensue from a youthful romance to her eventual position as the wife of a veterinarian. This is a story about growing up, connecting, and the dynamics of maturing and moving on while still yearning for something that could have been. The second is about Celia, the daughter and sister of veterinarians. She accompanies her brother on a farm call that evokes memories and invites introspection. While the scene in the barn plays out, watching her brother who so closely resembles their father, Celia reminisces not only about their shared childhood, but also about her adult trials and experiences. The last story is about Tom, a veterinarian who is unable to reduce his workload despite the physical and emotional toll it is having on both him and his marriage.

All three novellas share common threads: the stark reality of life as a rural veterinarian, or someone who loves one, and the juxtaposition of the blunt realities with sentimental reflection and simple human connections. In different ways, the characters in all three stories evoke a wide range of emotions—love, loss, joy, intimacy, loneliness, gentleness, and grief—and the reader can't help but to commiserate. Although there is a shared underlying theme, the plots of each diverge, and each reader will have their own preference not just for the different stories but for the different sections within each story.

*Night Watch: The Vet Suite* contains more emotion and introspection than one would expect from such a slender volume. However few the pages, it is a book that the reader will feel compelled to re-read to try to discover the enigmas behind the characters.

*Night Watch: The Vet Suite* (Invisible Publishing, 2021).

## *The Baudelaire Fractal*

by Lisa Robertson

Book review by Luc Murray Mercier



For those who love a well-turned phrase, for those who favour the unabashedly and idiosyncratically theoretical, and for those who take pleasure in the meandering and the digressive, *The Baudelaire Fractal* will prove to be a rewarding read. Lisa Robertson's debut novel sits somewhere at the juncture between cultural criticism, autofiction, and prose poetry. "Don't worry about it being a novel," Robertson has said of the book, "because it's really a bunch of prose poems disguised as a novel or a novel disguised as a bunch of prose poems."

*The Baudelaire Fractal's* narrator, Hazel Brown—whose name is an oblique homage to the longstanding tradition among poets and other writers of punning on eye and I—erects a mutable and plural sartorial self, a "body of poetry" (60), in order to relieve herself of the burden of identity. Hazel Brown is never only I. She is, first, the refracted image of Robertson herself: both are middle aged poets living in France, both were born in Toronto in the early 1960s, both left for Vancouver at a young age to pursue art, and both, perhaps most significantly, came to a stunning realization one morning in a Vancouver hotel room, they had "received the Baudelairean authorship" (16); his works, unwritten texts and all, had become theirs.

The revelation prompts Hazel Brown to revisit the formative years she spent in Paris in the mid-1980s. She makes it her task to "re-enter, by means of sentences, the course of [her] early apprenticeship" (23). Her intellectual autobiography reads, at times, like a collection of interlocking essays—on 19<sup>th</sup>-century French painting; on forgetting a flower's name; on Jeanne Duval, Baudelaire's muse and lover; on the notion of sartorial time; on linguist Émile Benveniste's theories of rhythm; on what a poet's furniture can

tell us about their work. Hazel Brown's initiation into poethood by way of reading is complicated by the gender dynamics at play in the space of art and literature. "Very often," she remarks, "a text contains its own police; the she-reader is simply shut out, among others" (106). Her relationship to the literary models made available to her is one of disidentification. "To disidentify," writes cultural theorist José Esteban Muñoz in *Disidentification: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999), "is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to 'connect' with the disidentifying subject" (12). Hazel Brown, through her disidentificatory engagement with the literary tradition, makes of exclusion and erasure sites of creativity and self appearance.

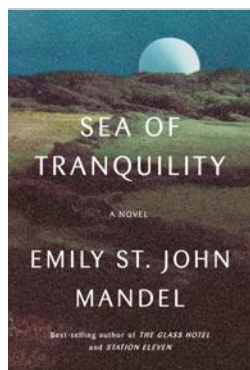
*The Baudelaire Fractal* (Coach House Books, 2020).



## *Sea of Tranquility*

by Emily St. John Mandel

Book review by Kathleen Hulley



Is life itself a simulation? And, if it is, what does that mean? This question haunts Emily St. John Mandel's latest novel, *Sea of Tranquility*. The book starts in 1912, when we meet Edwin St. John St. Andrew on his way to Canada from England. At first, it seems that Mandel is offering a reflection on British colonialism and a picture of early Canadian

settlement. But quickly, after Edwin's bizarre experience in a forest in British Columbia, we realize that the book is taking the reader on another path. We are transported to 2020, where we encounter Mirella Kessler attending a concert, and then move far into the future to meet novelist Olive Llewellyn in 2203. Llewellyn, who lives in gleaming Colony Two (the second colony on the moon) is on a book tour back on Earth, promoting her latest novel. And finally, we are transported to 2401 and introduced to the main narrator, Gaspéry-Jacques

Roberts, a time traveller from the Time Institute. What unites these distant, lonely characters is a "glitch," or a visual and sonic "anomaly," that they all experience.

*Sea of Tranquility* traces this "glitch," which itself becomes central, bringing together the experiences of the characters over a span of almost 500 years. And although the anomaly is mysterious at first, the reader gains a better understanding of it and its significance over the course of the book. Moreover, this glitch suggests that the reality we inhabit is actually a simulation.

Mandel, known for her 2014 novel *Station Eleven*, returns to familiar post-apocalyptic pandemic terrain with *Sea of Tranquility*. Written over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, the book refers to Covid, the Spanish flu, and pandemics that take place far in the future, in a world accustomed to—and better equipped to handle—the reality of recurring pandemics. Yet the book inhabits a realm where pandemics are merely in the background—the effects and ethics surrounding time travel are now what is under the microscope. Through its exploration of the moral and existential questions surrounding time travel, the book revisits a common trope (what happens when the past is disrupted through time travel?) from an inventive and compelling perspective.

Reading the second half of the novel is an interesting narrative experience: one is propelled forward to learn more about the unfolding story, but also constantly sent back to re-visit the events that one read in the past. The book's structure thus leads the curious, attentive reader to themselves perform their own sort of time travel, taken backwards and forwards, much like the characters in the book itself. It is performative—even more so with an e-book, which resides in simulation.

This is an ambitious and fascinating novel, and St. John Mandel's fans as well as those interested in sci-fi and dystopian works will surely enjoy the adventure of *Sea of Tranquility*.

*Sea of Tranquility* (HarperCollins, 2022). \*Also on OverDrive.



# Summer Reading Challenge!



Calling avid readers, seasonal readers, not-really readers, and everyone in between—from now until September 21, 2022, you have the chance to win a bundle of books from previous Imagination festivals by completing the Morrin Centre Summer Reading Challenge.

Complete the challenge by reading books that fulfill **seven** of the **ten** categories below, and email your list to [library@morrin.org](mailto:library@morrin.org). For an extra chance at winning, complete all **ten** categories!

*Please note:* The same book cannot count for two different categories.

A book by an Indigenous author

A book by an author from Quebec

A book by an Imagination 2022 author

A book of poetry by a Canadian author

A book with a number in the title

A book trending on #booktok

A book written for children

A book that has been banned or challenged

A book that has won a Canadian literary award

A book that is an LGBTQ+ memoir

If you would like assistance in finding books in any of these categories, please ask for help at the library desk! Or explore our featured collections on OverDrive at [morrin.overdrive.com](http://morrin.overdrive.com) for some Summer Reading Challenge suggestions!

Good luck and happy reading!

# Imagination 2022: A Recap

by Jeanne Lebossé-Gautron

All through February and March 2022, the Morrin Centre team (and especially me, as events coordinator!) was all but vibrating from both adrenaline and anticipation. In April, after all, we were holding the 2022 Imagination Writers' Festival, our first in-person literary festival since 2019!

On Tuesday, April 6, we launched the festival with a writing workshop given by children's author Andrée Poulin, followed by a presentation on the novel *Operation Angus* by author Terry Fallis. The evening was a great success, and a good indication of the flow of the entire festival.

The week unfolded with presentations by Ann Lambert, Christopher DiRaddo, Katherena Vermette, David A. Robertson, Jael Richardson, and Sean Michaels, drawing in an impressive number of visitors to the festival, all with insightful questions for the authors. Apparently, not even a pandemic could keep literary aficionados from gathering to meet Canadian authors in person!

The weekend of April 9 and 10, during which the majority of our festival events were held, started off on the right foot with a presentation by Matthew Forsythe, an author and illustrator of picture books for young children. He led our weekly Storytime



Francesca Ekwuyasi and Michael Bourguignon

event with brio, reading his new book, *Mina*, before teaching the young attendees (and their parents) how to draw cats, mice, and various mushrooms and plants! While some children had more markings on their hands than on their papers, they all undoubtedly had fun. The Storytime activity was then followed by a memoirs panel with Billy-Ray Belcourt and Eternity Martis, then a presentation by David Bergen on his novel *Out of Mind*.

The much-awaited Literary Notes event followed in late afternoon, drawing a sold-out crowd! The poets participating in this event—Cicely Belle Blain, Bertrand Bickersteth, and Sarah Venart—each offered a reading of their poems, accompanied by two pieces by a string trio from the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec. Musicians Julie Tanguay (violin), Caroline Béchard (violin), and Jean-Christophe Guelpa (cello) delighted us with a fantastic selection of pieces, including Sonata & Variations by Niccolò

Julie Tanguay (violin), Caroline Béchard (violin), and Jean-Christophe Guelpa (cello)





Monique Polak, Michael Bourguignon, and Dani Jansen

Paganini (1782–1840), *Strange Fruit* by Lewis Allan (1903–1986), and *Ricerca* by Floriano Maria Arresti (1667–1717). The Saturday ended with presentations by mystery writer Iona Wishaw and the ever-popular Kim Thúy.

Sunday morning dawned bright and early (but not too early) for the festival with a presentation by Francesca Ekwuyasi, followed by a panel on Children’s and Young Adult fiction with the winner and one of the finalists of the Québec Writer’s Federation Janet Savage Blachford Prize for Children’s and Young Adult Literature. While authors Su J. Sokol and Nadine Neema couldn’t join us due to Covid-19, Monique Polak and Dani Jansen had more than enough material to fill up the entire presentation with interesting, insightful, and at times hilarious stories.

Following the youth panel, visitors enjoyed presentations by science-fiction writer Derek Künsken, followed by author, journalist, and publisher Linda Leith. The day, and indeed the festival, ended on a high note (if you’ll pardon the pun) with a presentation by singer-songwriter Martha Wainwright, who spoke about her newly released memoir and surprised us with two songs. It was with a College Hall filled with the echoes of Wainwright’s beautiful, crooning voice that the festival came to a close.

For those curious about numbers, the festival welcomed more than 500 visitors over the course of six days during 19 events with 23 different authors. Of all these festival-goers, around 25% were students from local schools, from high school to university. It is very

gratifying to see so many young people participate in and enjoy our English-language literary community with such enthusiasm! It must also be said that the students had some of the best, most thoughtful questions to ask the visiting authors.

In parallel to our festival events, our Education Coordinator, Antoine Dumont, managed our Imagination in Schools program, coordinating a dozen visits to local schools with authors Matthew Forsythe, June Hur, Jon-Erik Lappano, Andrée Poulin, and David A. Robertson. About 500 students attended these presentations, often coming with more questions than could fit into the question periods at the end of each presentation!

All in all, the 2022 Imagination Writers’ Festival was a very successful return to in-person activities!



# Derek Künsken: Human-led Evolution and Global Issues

by Renée-Loup Caron

It turns out that science fiction novels are about more than space lizards fighting futuristic humans in flying spaceships. Author Derek Künsken elaborates on just how society would evolve if humans were genetically altered to perform certain tasks, so no space lizards here. Künsken explained his take on hard sci-fi space operas during an interview at this year's Imagination Writers' Festival. One of Université Laval's undergraduates from the English Literature and Linguistics program, Myriam Bowles-Carrier, moderated this fascinating interview. During the event, Künsken discussed his most recent book, *The Quantum Wars* (published October 2021), the third book of "The Quantum Evolution" series. The next instalment of the series, *The Flight from the Ages and Other Stories*, is set to come out on December 6, 2022.



During the interview, the most prominent topic in the discussion was his world-building process, with Künsken admitting that current events inspire some of the conflicts in his novels. Another great source he draws on is molecular biology. His mastery of the topic solidifies his novel's exploration of genetically modified humans in the future. Künsken also explained that his path to writing space operas was by no means typical. After studying molecular biology at the University of Guelph and McMaster University,

Künsken quasi-accidentally began to work for the Canadian federal public service, where he took on diplomatic humanitarian work.

Bowles-Carrier guided the discussion towards Künsken's distinct characters in *The Quantum Wars*. Künsken elaborated on the different sub-human species that had been genetically altered, over the past ten generations, to the extent that two individuals from nonidentical subgroups could not reproduce viable offspring.

One may ask what drew me to this event: if not the sci-fi genre, then what? I had come across a few passages from Künsken's novel on my way to the university one day. I recognized some of the scientific terminology from my prior studies in the sciences. I then researched the author and found that Künsken had left his career in molecular biology behind to do humanitarian work. Now, this was right up my alley because global humanitarian efforts have always been important to me. Having only those two things in common with the author, I decided to make my way to the event. The discussion around world-building illustrated how the author's background played a big part in the themes and topics in his novel. Although hard sci-fi and space operas are not what come to mind when one wants to explore the issues of our current world, Künsken brings both worlds together. He mentioned how his novels give him the chance to pose and explore theoretical questions without looking directly at their impact on our world. Equality, justice, colonization, and decolonization are subtly mixed in with space heists, technological advancement, and AI. Prior to this event, I had little passion for sci-fi literature; when the event ended, I could not wait to explore it further. The fact that such depth of questioning could be achieved in sci-fi completely blew my mind.



# Imagination 2022: An Interview with Jael Richardson

by Roxanne Bédard-Saucier

It is heartening to see that cultural events in Quebec City, including those in English, have a significant place in people's busy schedules. One such event, the annual Imagination Writers' Festival at the Morrin Centre, unites Quebecers with writers from across Canada to discuss various literary topics. Jael Richardson was among the writers who participated in this in-person festival on April 8, 2022. Her presentation took the form of an interview between her and host Myriam Bowles-Carrier. During the interview, Richardson discussed topics such as colonization, community, history, racism, and feminism.



Jael Richardson

Richardson's debut novel, *Gutter Child* (2021), is centred around the questions: What happens when the world is designed for your failure? How do you respond to this system? The "system" that Richardson mentioned in the interview can be

defined as encompassing a country's economic, political, and social mechanisms. In the interview, the audience was never given the "answers" to these questions, since Richardson did not want to tell people how to respond to the system; she instead preferred to make them question themselves to find the answers. This reflective approach is pertinent and adept because Canada is a highly diverse country, which means that there can be a plurality of reactions to the system. This approach is also effective as it produces long-lasting effects: the audience will continue to question themselves beyond the temporal scope of the festival.

I found Richardson's view on history to be hard-hitting, but necessary to discuss. She talked about the

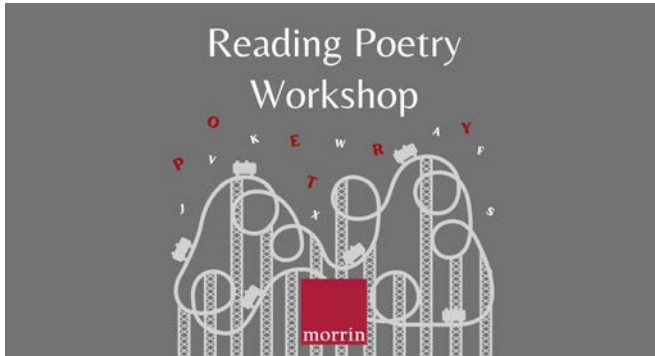
historical challenges that minorities face. They are often buried under the surface of mainstream history. Early in school, we are taught mainstream history, and it is not until later that we learn that history is biased and subjective. An example that Richardson gave is how we are taught that since Canada became a confederation in 1867, it has been a great country in which everyone is equal. This view casts an overly positive light on Canada's history; and, indeed, such a positive light makes us tend to forget that Canada had slavery and residential schools.

Richardson spoke of the inability to destroy the unequal system, and I appreciated her realism and honesty about the situation. In my opinion, hiding under a false sense of optimism by claiming that changing the system is easily achievable is more damaging than to accept that change is a long and difficult endeavour. Another element of the interview that I appreciated was how Richardson, despite talking about topics such as racism, still ended on a positive note: she said that we can try to make people understand how the system works and who it privileges, and maybe then, with this newfound awareness, we can make the country more equitable for all marginalized peoples.

In sum, I found Richardson's presentation eye-opening to the realities of race and identity. I deeply admire her inclusivity when it comes to diversity, which, I believe, is a crucial attitude to have in today's world with its increasing demands for social justice and change. Also, what I valued about the interview was that it was not simply a one-evening event: the topics Richardson spoke of will continue to germinate in my mind and make me question history, politics, and society. Richardson, I believe, gave the audience several seeds in the form of questions, and maybe one day, a tree will see the light of day.



## Upcoming Events: General Public



Reading poetry can seem like a daunting exercise, but it doesn't have to be!

Join us on **June 26** for an introduction to the pleasures of reading poetry. We'll explore poems by three Canadian poets in search of an answer to two simple questions: What are poems made of and what can they do?

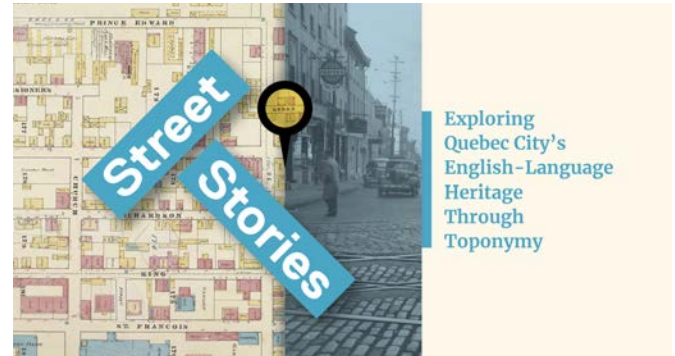
The aim of this workshop is to give you the tools and vocabulary with which to discuss, think about, and above all, appreciate poetry.

Poems under study in Workshop #1:

- "Flight of the Roller-Coaster" by Raymond Souster
- "David" by Earle Birney
- "A Backwards Journey" by P.K. Page

These event will be hybrid so that members can join in person or online. Please email [library@morrin.org](mailto:library@morrin.org) to learn more or to sign up.

Workshop #1 will be held on **June 26 at 4:30 p.m.** And stay tuned for more information about Workshop #2!



Discover the history of the English-speaking community through the traces it has left on the city's toponymy, from the time of the British conquest until World War II in *Street Stories: Exploring Quebec City's English-Language Heritage Through Toponymy*, a new interactive exhibit!

The names of parks, squares, streets, avenues, and alleys recall the contributions of the English-speaking population to the development of Quebec City: Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Saint-Sacrement, Montcalm, Sillery, Saint-Roch, Saint-Sauveur, and Vieux-Québec-Cap-Blanc-Colline parlementaire. See some streets born and others disappear as the city evolved.

In this interactive exhibit, names linked to the history of the English-speaking community are identified, and by clicking on them, you will be able to access a brief history and photographs of the place spanning the past 150 years. Stay tuned for more details!



*If These Walls  
Could Talk:  
The Presidents  
and their  
Portraits*

### **Arts Alive! Quebec**

The *Arts Alive! Quebec* festival will return to the Morrin Centre in August 2022 with more delightful concerts and activities!

### **Picture This**

A series of photography workshops coming in September!

# Upcoming Events: Book Quest 2022



*Book Quest*, the Morrin Center's summer reading program for children, is back for its 18<sup>th</sup> year this summer! In partnership with the TD Summer Reading Club, the Morrin Centre invites children between the ages of 3 and 12 to participate in its Storytime and craft activities as well as its S.T.E.A.M. challenges. Our theme this year is “**Once Upon a Time: Myths and Legends.**” The theme touches on creating activities that contribute to participants’ growth by inspiring them to create and develop their own stories. Stories and activities include folk and fairy tales as well as old and new contemporary stories that highlight valuable lessons and entertain.

As always, *Book Quest* will be separated into two age groups: children ages 3–7 will be entertained with a story, a short activity, and a related craft; children

ages 8–12 can participate in a weekly S.T.E.A.M. challenge—a guided science experiment or engineering task worthy of even the maddest of scientists—and receive reading suggestions.

During the last week of June, parents will be asked to make a quick stop at the Morrin Centre to collect a fun-packed activity bag containing all the necessary materials (and a few extra surprises) for children to participate in *Book Quest* activities at home. I look forward to sharing a fun-filled summer with you all!

All *Book Quest* activities are free of charge. For further information, please contact Eunice Offeibea Manteaw, our Summer Reading Program Coordinator, at [bookquest@morrin.org](mailto:bookquest@morrin.org).

**Saturdays, 9:30 a.m.**  
**Children, 3–7**

July 2	Carson Crosses Canada
July 9	How to be a Pirate
July 16	Five Minutes
July 23	T. Rexes Can't Tie their Shoes
July 30	Class Clown
August 6	Red: A Crayon's Story
August 13	If You Happen to Have a Dinosaur
August 20	The Pot of Wisdom: Ananse Tales
August 27	The Amazing Zoe: A Queen Like Me!

**Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m.**  
**Children, 8–12**

July 5	Engineering: Jellybean Building
July 12	Art: Paper Plate Maze Art
July 19	Art: Yarn Lantern
July 26	Science: Floating Fish
August 2	Sound: Harmonica
August 9	Geology: Crayon Rocks
August 16	Engineering: Build an Archimedes Screw
August 23	Art: Crawling Colours

## Of Mice and Frogs: An Interview with Matthew Forsythe

by Antoine Dumont

Earlier this spring, the Morrin Centre's Education Coordinator, Antoine Dumont, sat down virtually with children's book author and illustrator Matthew Forsythe to discuss Forsythe's children's books, artistic inspiration, the creative process, and future projects. Forsythe is the author-illustrator of *Mina* (2022) and *Pokko and the Drum* (2019), which won the Publishers' Weekly Best Book of the Year and received the Boston Globe-Horn Honor Book Award, as well as the graphic novel *Ojingogo* (2008). He has also worked in film and television, notably on *Adventure Time* (2012–2014), *The Midnight Gospel* (Netflix, 2020), and *Robin Robin* (Netflix, 2021). Forsythe was featured at this year's Imagination Writers' Festival and also participated in the 2022 Imagination in Schools. Here is an abridged version of the conversation.



**Antoine Dumont (A):** First of all, thank you for agreeing to do this interview. Let me start right away by asking: When did you first want to become a writer or an artist?

**Matthew Forsythe (M):** Like everyone, I drew a lot when I was a kid. I had always wanted to illustrate, and I just never stopped. I didn't go to art school, but even through university I was "the cartoonist." And then in my 20s, I did freelance illustration for magazines. I've always loved it and just kept going. Kind of like *Pokko!* (laughter).

**A:** How many books have you illustrated and/or written? And which one would you be proudest of?

**M:** Well, I've probably worked on about 10 or 12 books. I'm most proud of *Mina*. *Mina's* where I'm at in my life right now; it's the most recent part of my journey as an artist and as a writer. I feel that with *Pokko and the Drum*, I had some strong ideas that I was trying out, and then with *Mina*, I had more confidence in those ideas.

**A:** Interesting! I felt that *Pokko and the Drum* was very much about a child doing what they loved, with the parents bearing down on them. And *Mina* felt the other way, where the parent explores their passions and the child questions parental decisions.

**M:** I didn't think about that when I wrote the books, but that's exactly what's happening. Both books are about the relationship I have with my parents. And *Mina* is about how sometimes parents take care of their children, and sometimes children take care of their parents. We don't talk about that very much, about how this happens at times, even from a young age.

**A:** *What made you shift from creating graphic novels, such as Ojingogo, to children's books?*

**M:** Comics take forever—it's such a long process. About five or seven years ago, I got into painting: full-colour, expressionist paintings. And I think picture books were a better venue for those paintings. In picture books, I think it's much easier to make big paintings part of the story. I just really wanted to paint, and it was a way to do that. Also, I really love the mechanics of picture books. There are some artists who have paintings in their comics, and they're incredible, but for comics, I think it's a delicate marriage. Nicolas de Crécy, he does amazing paintings in his comics, and Manuele Fior, he's awesome. Many French artists combine it well, but it's not as much as a tradition in English-language comics.

**A:** *Are they inspirations for your art?*

**M:** For sure! I still read comics constantly. Manuele Fior is an amazing writer too—very literary. And Nicolas de Crécy's paintings are also very inspiring, very focused on light and they feel very alive.

**A:** *Would you be able to name a few other inspirations, either authors or artists?*

**M:** So many artists in Quebec are a huge inspiration to me. Artists like Isabelle Arsenault—I used to share a studio with her—and a lot of artists at La Pastèque, such as Geneviève Godbout. I'm also really inspired by Korean picture books. There's an author, Myung-Ae Lee whom I love and an artist named Seo Soo. Their work is very expressionist; it feels like an expressionist painting merged with picture books, and it's the perfect balance for me.

**A:** *Yes, there is a bit of an expressionist style in both Pokko and Mina. You've mentioned Korean artists, which segues well into the next question. You have spent some time working with children in Korea. Did the experience influence your art and the way you write for children?*

**M:** 100%. In fact, it's 100% the reason why I do this. I made my first comic book while I was teaching kindergarten in Korea. The kids I worked with were so inspiring. We would tell each other stories, and the dream-logic of children unlocked this sort of creativity. And also Korean art! There's a bookstore in Seoul called Kyobo, and I would go there every weekend and just look at the picture books. Those were what inspired me. I thought, "I would love to make picture books one day." When I do events now with kids, it's very inspiring. Kids are naturally on a level with art where there is free thinking and a free flow of ideas, which is really inspiring. I did a Zoom event with 150 kids last week, and



they're showing you their drawings and everyone is like, "Genius!" It's a cliché, but I feel it's what we're searching for as adults, this level of connection with ourselves.

**A:** *I agree! As you're growing up, there are restraints that you put on yourself, that society expects of you. But as a kid, you do have this free-flowing imagination that's just boundless. If you want your firetruck to have wings and land on the moon, then why not! Now, following up, what do you think makes for a good story?*

**M:** I think stories come from truthful emotional moments in our lives. I think a good short story or a good picture book or a good painting will communicate something from the artist in a way that words can't, in

## | Miscellanea

a way that will tell: “I feel exactly what this person means.” I think a good story articulates that. So, for me it’s about truthful emotional moments in our lives. There’s an artist named Akiko Miyakoshi, who is a Japanese picture book maker, and she’s working on that level: communicating emotional moments. She’s not focused on story, she’s not focused on characters, she’s just like, “This is what it felt like to be carried by my parents when I was a kid.” Or, “That’s what it felt like to see my grandmother after a long time.” That’s what I’m going for.

**A:** How long does it take you to create stories and illustrations for a book such as *Mina* or *Pokko and the Drum*?

**M:** It takes about six to eight months to paint the book. For both *Mina* and *Pokko*, it took a day to draft the story. But then it was six to eight months to re-write it since I wasn’t done with the writing until I was finished with the painting. It’s a very merged experience. I did both at the same time because you do a painting and think, “Well, now I need to change the text a little bit.” And then you write another line, and then adjust the image. The whole process is about eight months, with all the revisions, tweaking, moving around. Sometimes you also have to step away for a couple of weeks. *Mina* was a little longer than normal, I think because of the pandemic. And it’s actually a longer book: it’s 70 pages, which is unusual for a picture book.

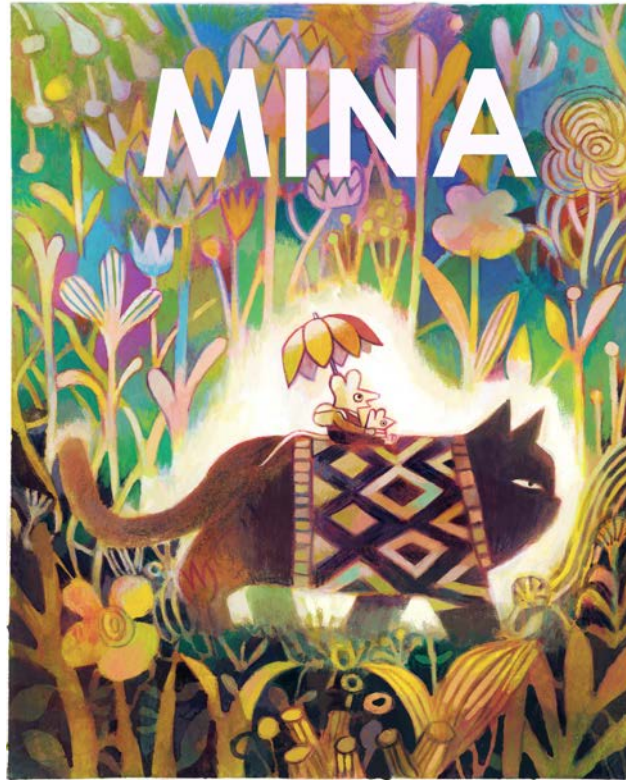
**A:** When I read *Pokko and the Drum* for the first time, I fell in love with it because it’s just so relatable, so soft and kind. I shared it with a few of my friends and it became an instant hit. There is one panel in particular that makes us laugh: “It was quiet, too quiet.” Here *Pokko*

has a suspicious look on her face. It’s quite simple and so expressive. Just a few shapes, and it tells so much.

**M:** *Pokko and the Drum* does have those nice push-and-pull moments where it’s quieter. I haven’t thought too much about it, but in *Mina* it feels like the volume is higher the whole time. *Pokko and the Drum* is more undulating, but *Mina* is like “thomp thomp thomp-totom thump.” I used to work on a show called *Adventure Time*, and every episode followed this three-act structure. To me, *Mina* felt structurally like an episode of *Adventure Time*. There’s even a chase scene, a bad guy at the end, and some weird little twist! I was inspired from working on that show and seeing how those guys wrote.

**A:** In addition to writing and illustrating children’s books, you were the lead designer on the hit TV show *Adventure Time* as well as *Midnight Gospel*. How does the creative process differ between the different mediums?

**M:** Working on those projects is completely different, in a good way. I’m working on a team, so it’s very collaborative. There’s a writing team, which I wasn’t a part of since I was a designer, so I was taking orders. And it feels really good sometimes to work on a team where you’re just executing someone else’s vision. With *Adventure Time*, I was very much trying to execute the storyboardist’s vision, and with *Midnight Gospel*, I was just the character designer trying to do what I was told. It was also super fun and nice to be working with artists I loved and admired. I wasn’t writing, my name wasn’t on the marketing material. It was just a really nice kind of counterpoint to this work. So, I do love working on animated projects.





**A:** Your art style is very vivid and easily recognizable. What medium do you use for your art?

**M:** I mostly use watercolour, and then I use gouache and pencil to deepen those paintings. I would like to move into using oils or different mediums, but mostly I just use gouache, watercolour, and pencil.

**A:** And what would be the size of your drawings?

**M:** It varies, but they're probably about this size. [Proceeds to show a 25 cm x 15 cm rectangle]. And then we blow it up so that each page is almost doubled. It changes for each page, but they're pretty small to be honest. And then there are some pages where I want more texture, like the page where the wolf says, "I'm sorry." It's actually very small, but I knew I wanted the brushstrokes to come alive, and so I blew it up. I think Beatrice Alemagna does that too. I think she works small and then blows it up so you can really feel the texture.

**A:** Has your illustration style or the way you work changed because of technology? And if so, how?

**M:** To be honest, the older I get, the further I stay away from technology, the more I want to go back to traditional media. I want to keep it simple and minimize my reliance on technology. Painting is very cathartic to me; it feels good to me, and I want to get better at painting and controlling it. You know how editors in film talk about how they used to cut the films. They used to think a lot more about the film, but now because of editing programs, you don't have to think at all. It's like that with Photoshop too. I want to get to that place in my mind where I'm thinking

more and planning things before I do them. So, I'm moving away from tech.

**A:** I'm now going to delve a bit more into the individual books. In *Pokko and the Drum*, the story is about a child frog finding their passion, and the parents' realization of their child's talent. The parents never dismiss Pokko's art, never say, "Don't do that." They just point out that it is a bit loud and ask her to go outside. Is there some element in your life that inspired you?



**M:** Yes. I come from a small working-class town in Ontario. I went to high school in that same town. Everyone's dad worked in factories, and no one was supportive of the arts or being an artist. They more often said that I should know my place. That I should just get a job in a factory or a gas station. And I felt like that growing up during my high school years, which is where you start thinking about what you want to do when you're older. So that's where the story came from.



**A:** In *Pokko*, I appreciate how the mother is the one who reads, and the father is the one who takes care of Pokko, cooks, and cleans.

**M:** So, that's my mom in the book. My mom was a single mother and a librarian. When she came home, she just didn't have any energy to be cooking, cleaning, and taking care of us. And I think that's the reality for a lot of families that we don't see in picture books. We just see the parents who are super-parents. I think in both books the dad is like my dad, where he's got his hobbies and his interests. And that's the other thing. I wanted to show that they had interests outside of just being parents. He loves to cook. She loves to read. I think in a lot of picture books, parents are just parenting.

**A:** Agreed! Next question: *To kill your darlings* is a common trope in writing. Is there anything that was in *Pokko* and the *Drum* or *Mina* that you liked, but that didn't make the final cut?

**M:** Mina's dad loves this cat. He takes care of it, knits it a sweater. I wanted to show him painting the cat, making art of it. There is one page I had where he was making a cheese sculpture of the cat. And I loved it! I loved what it said, how he's just adoring the cat, making art in its image. And I also loved the image of him doing the cheese sculpture, and Mina wondering,

"What about me?" She's his actual daughter [laughs]. But I had to cut it because it just felt like a different book, a different story.

**A:** *Maybe for a third children's book?*

**M:** Yes, it could be *Mina and the Cheese Sculpture*. [Laughs]

**A:** *Speaking of future books, would you be able to share a glimpse of a future project you're working on?*

**M:** I did spend most of last year working on a Jim Henson project, and then the next project I'm going to work on is a new book. *Mina* and *Pokko* take place in the same world, and there's going to be a third book in that world. What ties everything together is that they're animals in Pokko's band. Mina's father is in the band, as is the mouse who is playing the drums.

**A:** *I'm looking forward to its release! Finally, do you have a favourite picture book?*

**M:** I think my favourite book is *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs, or *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Keats. They're different books, but they have parallels—a similar sadness in beauty and nostalgia. They're also funny and charming, and just wonderful picture books.

**A:** *Thank you again for the interview! Before we conclude, do you have anything else that you'd like to share?*

**M:** I think it's wonderful, living in Montreal and the book culture in Quebec. It's one of my favorite places to be because we're at the crossroads between a lot of great European and North American literature. They meet here. I think it's really special and very inspiring.



## Meet Our New Assistant Executive Director: Olivier "Bill" Bilodeau



I cannot express how excited I am and privileged I feel to be part of the Morrin Centre as the new Assistant Executive Director. This new job marks a renewal in my professional career as I have spent the last 15 years working in film festivals.

Born and raised in Vallée-Jonction in the Beauce, I experienced my cinematic epiphany while I was studying at CEGEP St. Lawrence and living in an apartment just across the street. One evening when, by pure chance, I had the good fortune to rent André Forcier's *L'eau chaude, l'eau frette*, for the sole reason that my roommate and I thought the title was so hilarious with how it used "frette" instead of "froid." But as funny as I thought this was, this movie experience itself was one of the most powerful I have come across in my cinephile life. Few movies have

had such an impact on me. From that day forward, the cinema never left me and became one of my greatest passions.

After a short detour in business administration at Université de Sherbrooke, I graduated in film studies and political science from Université de Montréal. After a few years wandering from place to place, notably in Toronto and China, I landed my first job in the cinema industry at the Montreal International Documentary Festival (RIDM), which I held from 2008 to 2011. I then returned to our beautiful city and co-founded the Quebec City Film Festival (FCVQ), which launched in September 2011, and for which I directed the programming and administration until January 2020. In 2021, I was also in charge of programming for the 2021 edition of Les Percéides festival in Percé and was the Head of Programming of the 40<sup>th</sup> edition of the Rendez-vous Québec Cinéma last April in Montreal.

My love for cinema is such that I like all kinds of movies, except for rom-coms and musicals, and have a slight preference for sci-fi and horror flicks. I hold in high regard the works of Jacques Tati, Werner Herzog, Stanley Kubrick, Takeshi Miike, Sergio Leone, Andrei Tarkovsky, Hayao Miyazaki, Buster Keaton, and the aforementioned André Forcier, just to name a few. As a bit of a history buff, I also sit on the board of directors the Société d'histoire du sport de la Capitale nationale. Speaking of sports, I would be remiss if I didn't mention my other passion, on par with cinema: baseball. Either watching a movie in a dark theater or sitting in a ballpark munching peanuts makes me want to steal Ray Kinsella's line from *Field of Dreams*: "Maybe this is heaven."



## Meet Our New Accounting and Financial Clerk: Olga Grystai



After my studies, I decided to enter the accounting and economics department at the Kyiv National University of Economics, one of the most prestigious schools in Ukraine. Why accounting? I don't know, but my heart told me to do it! Accounting combines my love of science, paperwork, and logical thinking. In my work, everything is clear, understandable, and controlled. I like it, and I feel in my place doing important tasks. Accounting is the foundation of any good enterprise, truly at its core, like a framework. Outsiders and customers may not notice, but the success and integrity of an organization depends on it. The profession requires a lot of concentration, perseverance, and devotion. Given my love of work, I was rewarded with a quickly ascending career in Kyiv, becoming a company's chief accountant. I was valued and respected for my diligence and responsibility in

my work. I continue to have a good relationship with my former employer and colleagues— but it's now time to grow and develop further!

I came to Quebec at the end of August 2021 and started studying French at Université Laval. I adore French, the language of poets and love. I've met many friends and found a number of people who share similar views. There are many educated, multifaceted, and progressive people in Quebec. I am very interested in learning about local culture and history, so I seize every opportunity to attend events, go on excursions, and communicate with interesting people. From time to time I volunteer, helping to organize and run interesting projects and events.

At one of those meetings, I learned about the Morrin Centre. I heard many good things about the place, so after reading more about the organization online, I submitted my application and was hired. That's how sudden bold deeds turn into an interesting adventure. The Centre was described as an organization involved in cultural and social development with many interesting people. It is worth emphasizing that we work in a historic building with deep roots in Quebec City's past. I like to see the reaction of the people who go on our tours, visiting the mysterious nooks and crannies of the former prison. The team here is also very friendly and has welcomed me warmly. Finally, I like to get off at Place d'Youville and walk the streets, breathing in the air of the historic Old City.



## Meet Our New Library Assistant: Luc Murray Mercier



Like a character out of Beckett, Luc doesn't move much. His perfect day—of which he needs at least one a week—is spent in bed, his true home, the best in every respect, where he loafs and reads or listens to music, half awake and with eyes closed. The curtains would remain drawn all day long if his partner (whom you will have guessed to be the author of this sketch) did not open them in a bid for light. Younger, Luc had dreamed of a small bookshelf, just one, containing the twenty or so books dearest to his heart and that gave him the most to think about—books of poetry, all. He was intent on not recreating his childhood room, whose bed was enclosed by a wall of books precariously stacked. Never again! Alas, history repeats itself and the bookshelves have overflowed once more.

Almost as much as he loves horizontality, Luc loves to walk. He can go on seemingly endlessly. Walks are an occasion for the liveliest and the longest of conversations, those which outlast even the day's light. His excitement, his generosity both as listener and speaker, and his interest in others can carry a conversation from Cap Blanc to Sillery and back again. Luc can be something of a quarrelsome converser; he likes to put the ideas of those around him to the test—though he sometimes takes it a little bit too far.

Before bed, when he is in low spirits, he watches videos that make him laugh, his favourite being a clip from the third episode of *The Day Today* about a fictional “drubbing incident” between John Major and Queen Elizabeth. “It’s bigger than that, Chris, it’s large”: nothing could be funnier.

If he had to choose between eating and drinking, Luc would do nothing but drink. A trip to the grocery store always calls for “a little something to drink.” Not to worry, though, he can't stand alcohol. Recently, he's taken a liking to non-alcoholic beers. Those he enjoys the most have “that tart aftertaste.” He's after something that tastes “like the bottom of a gym bag.” Luc has a peculiar way of describing his tastes.

Above all, he loves words, more for the way they feel in the mouth and in the ear than for their evocative power. He is fond of the strange ones, the specific ones, the ones whose pronunciations are particularly flavourful, the ones whose origins are distant or odd or fortuitous. When the responsibilities of adult life aren't bearing down on him, he plays with sounds and words. It can take him upwards of six months of fiddling with a particular poem before putting it to paper. Luc can be forgetful, but his poems never leave him.

It was undoubtedly his fondness for words that led Luc to complete a BA in translation. Now, Luc is pursuing an MA in English-language literatures. His thesis is an exploration of the strategies of address in Emily Dickinson's “Master Documents.” Mention Emily Dickinson, and Luc will explain to you, with a quiver in his voice and a glint in his eye, why she is the “greatest poet to have ever lived.”



## Meet Our New *Book Quest* Coordinator: Eunice Offeibea Manteaw



I am excited to be this year's *Book Quest* Coordinator. Growing up, my dad made a conscious effort to make reading a part of my life. I grew up reading a lot of books, mostly by the famous children's writer Enid Blyton as well as mystery stories such as Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys, just to mention a few. In addition, because I studied French in high school and during my undergraduate studies, I had the opportunity to study French literature, which exposed me to books such as *Sans famille* by Hector Malot. Originally from Ghana in West Africa, I also grew up reading and listening to local African folklores and tales, which helped me appreciate African culture.

I have volunteered and participated in several children's programs both in Ghana and in Canada. In Ghana, one of the projects I worked on was to help students prepare for Model United Nation conferences both locally and internationally by assisting them with the rules of procedures and country research. In Canada, I volunteered as a summer camp counselor in 2019 at the Stillwood Camp and Conference Centre in British Columbia, where I assisted kids in various indoor and outdoor activities.

When not working as *Book Quest* Coordinator, I am a full-time Masters student in International Development at Université Laval learning about how to contribute to the development of our ever-growing world. I love reading, travelling, and discovering new things and cultures.

I'm looking forward to sharing my experiences with the *Book Quest* participants this summer as well as learning from them. We will be reading interesting books and making beautiful arts and crafts during Storytimes. In addition, there are some wonderful projects and reading suggestions for our S.T.E.A.M. Club.

I look forward to sharing a fun-filled summer with you all!





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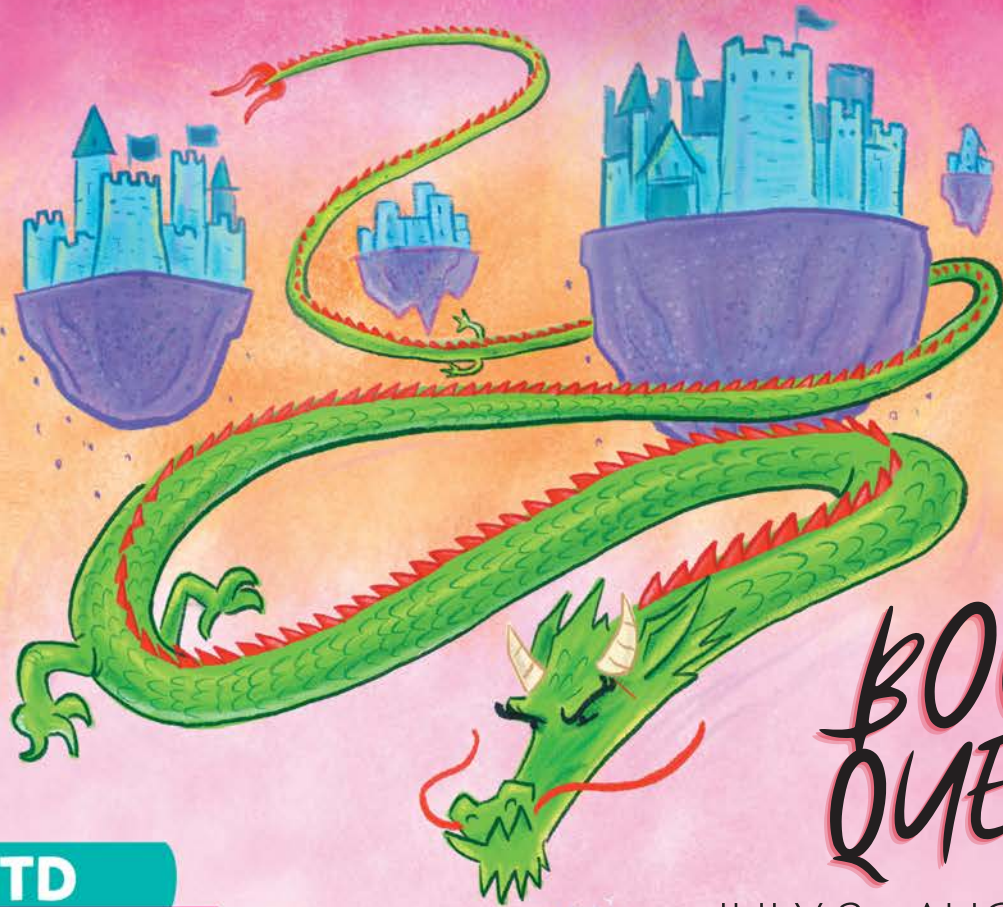
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