

WORD

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WRITERS' ALLIANCE NL



IN THIS ISSUE:

PANDEMIC POETRY

ARTISTS IN THE COVID-AFFECTED COMMUNITY

WRITING ABOUT DIFFICULT TOPICS

ADVANTAGES OF HISTORICAL FICTION IN DIFFICULT TIMES

WORD Magazine is an annual publication created by and for the membership of the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador, as such the magazine serves to educate and entertain members with non-fiction articles and advertisements of resources valuable to the local writing community.

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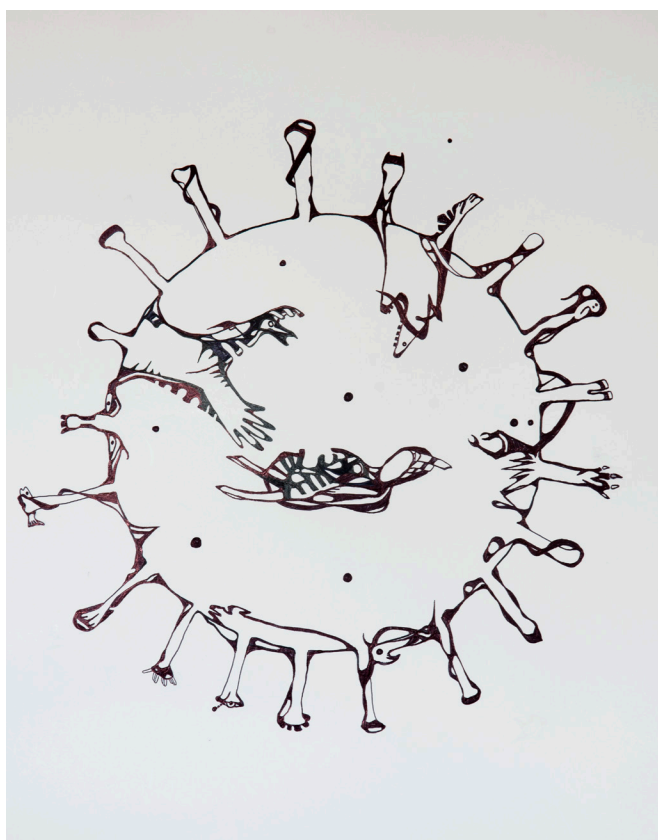
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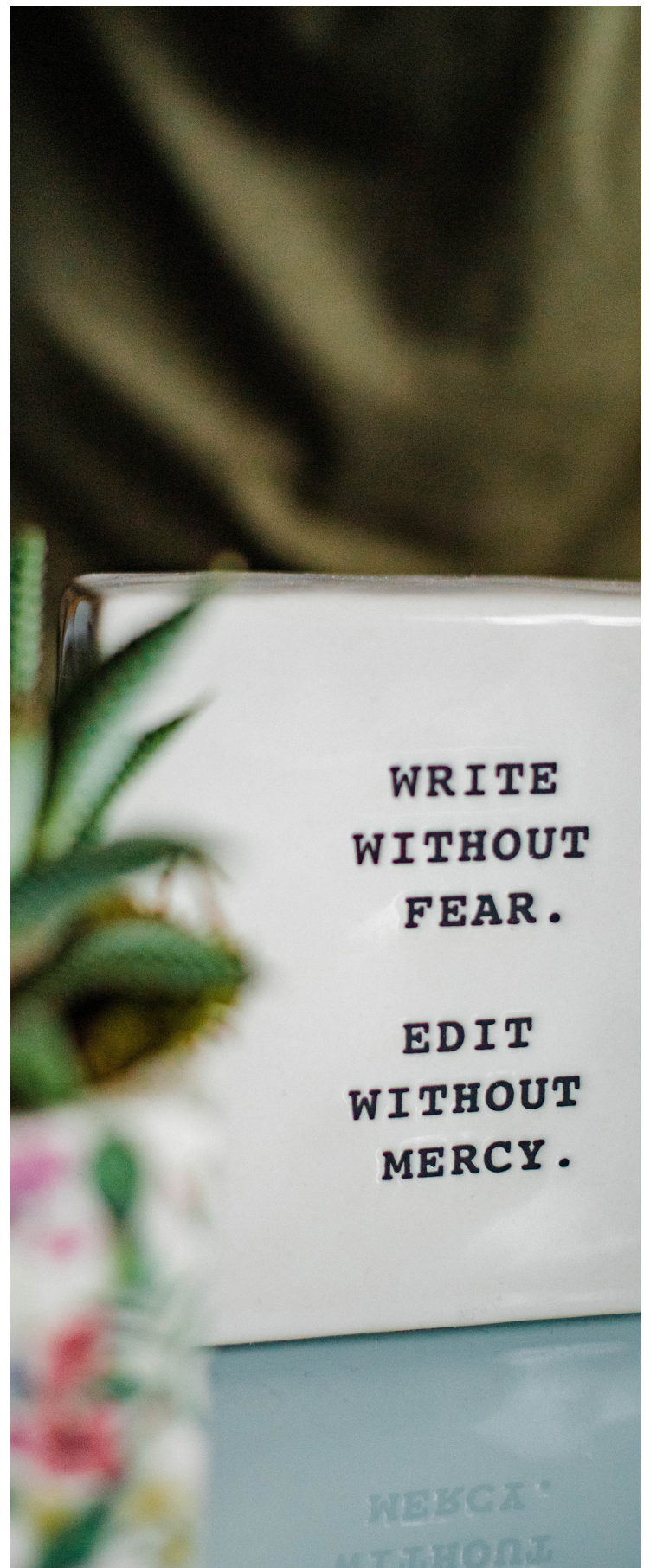
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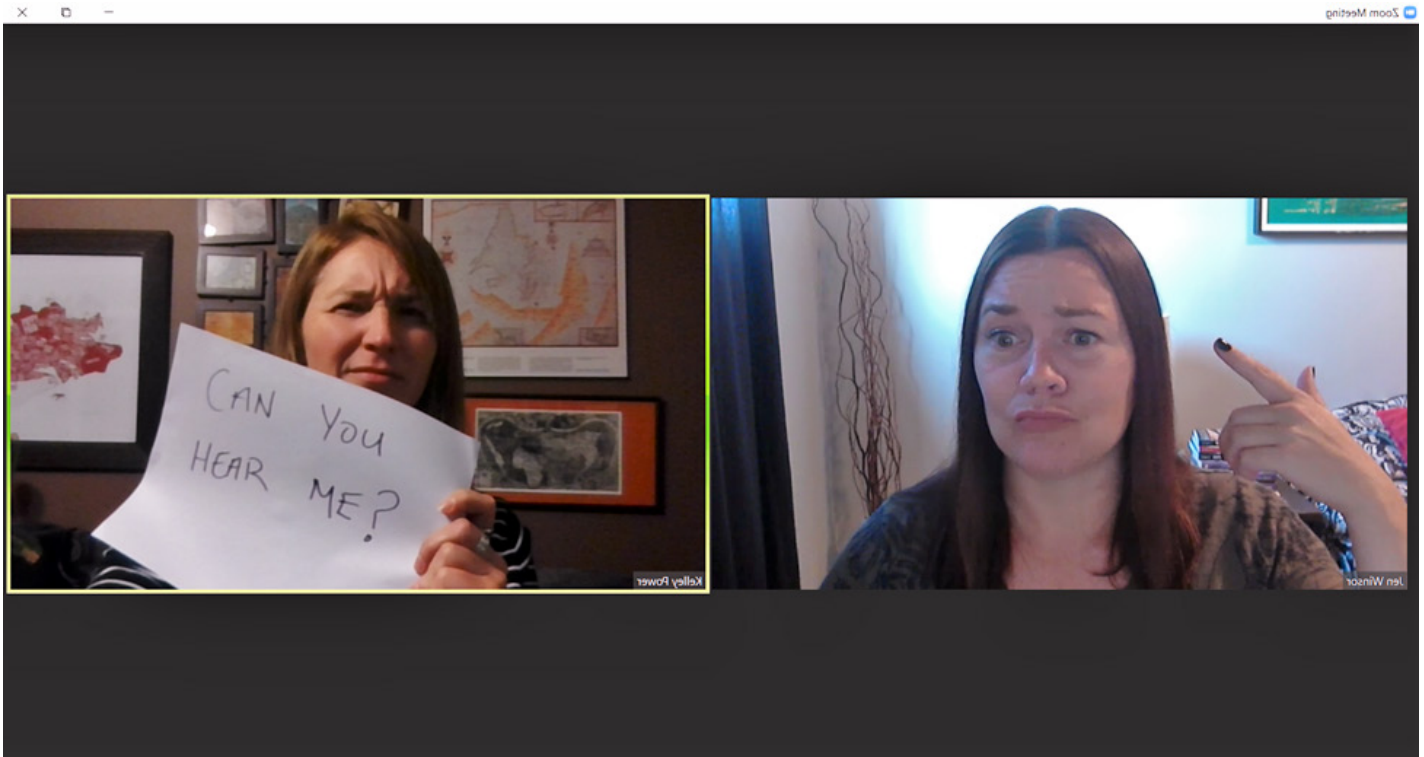
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A LITANY IN THE TIME OF PLAGUE

WANL CONTINUES TO PROVIDE MEMBERSHIP VALUE



A look at all our meetings over the past six months. It's not been easy, but it sure has been fun!

By Jen Winsor and Kelley Power

It feels like an awesome responsibility to write for what is intended to be a landmark edition of our organization's magazine – a volume recording the experiences of writers negotiating the realities of a global pandemic. It also feels as if weighty pronouncements or profound insights are required under these circumstances. We have none. We're just muddling our way through this like everyone else. If there's wisdom to come from this issue of WORD, it will be found in the stories of the 22 authors that appear in the following pages.

STEPPING UP AND LOGGING ON

It's been our luck to have a competent complement working with WANL

during these uncertain times. Our board and staff have brought their best to the running the organization, spiritedly logging on for hours-long video board

“DID YOU TURN ON YOUR AUDIO?”

WHY CAN'T I HEAR YOU?

WHOSE DOG IS BARKING?

CAN YOU MUTE?”

meetings, joining in the chorus of, “Did you turn on your audio?” “Why can't I see you?” “Whose dog is barking? Can you mute?” accompanying each new call.

Members have been no less game, put-

ting their best faces forward for online readings and remote jurying, showing patience and understanding of the different way the Alliance must operate under such unprecedented conditions.

A BIG BOOST

When COVID-19 hit Newfoundland and Labrador in mid-March this year, WANL responded in the same manner as many other organizations: we closed the office and staff began working from home; we punted all our meetings to an online platform; we began planning how to minimize the impact of lockdowns, alert levels, and inevitable online-event fatigue on our programs

and services. Even our financial practices evolved to include more e-banking.

The energy to keep our organization thriving during the pandemic got an infusion this summer when ArtsNL

dispersed \$20,000 in funding to WANL through its *Art in the Time of Covid* program.

DOING OUR PART

With manuscript evaluations, workshops and this special edition of WORD among the projects to which we will allocate these funds, our aim is to maxi-

imized by COVID-19. Although we've heard good news stories from writers whose incomes have been positively impacted by the pandemic, what we most often hear is that times are rough. If economic forecasts are more accurate than our local weather variety, our province is headed for rougher.

The long-term financial implications of the pandemic on authors, publishers, and the writing community are unknown; another uncertainty to add to those everyone has waded through these past months. B'ys, it's a lot to process.

“YOU STUCK WITH US
WHEN WE KNOW YOU HAD
GROCERIES TO SANITIZE AND
KIDS TO HOMESCHOOL.”

mize paid WANL opportunities, while providing professional development programming to keep writers engaged and refining their craft at a time when creativity can use a boost.

Thank you to our long-term funders, private donors, and event sponsors for being stalwart in their support of local writers by maintaining sustaining funding, awards sponsorship, and in-kind donations, respectively.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, City of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador Credit Union, The Bruneau Family, Killick Capital, and myriad local businesses: we appreciate the trust you put in WANL's ability to deliver its mandate and follow through on programming under different and difficult circumstances.

A COMMITTED TEAM

Our thanks as well to our committee volunteers and others who contribute their time to the organization: you stuck with us when we know you had groceries to sanitize and kids to homeschool.

We know all our members have been

A MEASURE OF FOCUS (OR DISTRACTION)

We see WANL's role, small as it is within the immensity of this predicament, as doing our best to preserve programming and support for our members. Our means are modest, but we'll continue to make the most of them to keep our core programs afloat, expand paid opportunities, and promote our writing community. It won't lead to a COVID-19 vaccine, sure. Maybe, though, WANL can offer a measure of focus (or distraction) and relief during this deer-in-the-headlights of a time we're living in.

Be safe, readers. Wear a mask and wash your hands. We're not kidding; we'll be following up.



Jen Winsor is the Executive Director and **Kelley Power** is the President of the Board of the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador. Power is a lifelong logophile who divides her time between communications consulting and writing. Winsor has background in journalism and communications and has been committed to the Newfoundland and Labrador arts scene for more than 15 years.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

LOOKING FOR THE HELPERS

By Alisha Morrissey

There are a few things you should probably know about me - The Editor - as you flip through this magazine.

The first is: I'm a doer.

Throughout my entire career I was always the first one with a hand up. I always come to a problem with a practical, common-sense solution. I won't fall apart or give up until the job is done.

After the storm has passed? Well ... that's another story.

The second thing you should know is that words are my life. I read compulsively. I write for a living. I give only books as presents. I began my career as a journalist and that's made me into an amateur sociologist. One of my favourite things to read is historical fiction. I love reading about, and discovering how people lived in different times and cultures.

That's why, in my view, this edition is so important. It's posterity. It's our lived experience. People will want to know and we'll have this record. The stories in these pages will tell the next generation of writers how to survive and even thrive in the most difficult of times. Not just what they wrote about or how their work was impacted, but how they stepped up.

CELEBRATING THE DOERS

I want to use this space to celebrate those writers who stepped up. The other doers in our community.

Doers like Martha Muzychka, a

St. John's writer and consultant, who stepped away from the keyboard and up to her sewing machine.

BEST LAID PLANS

"My plan was to make enough masks for my family and a few immune compromised friends as well as myself. Like the old shampoo commercial, friends told friends and people started asking if I could make some for them. So I did," she says. "I got the idea to do a fundraiser

back and help keep people safe in the community. Best of all, I'm not idle."

STEPPING UP

One of our own committee members, Susan Flanagan jumped at the chance to help the most vulnerable when they needed it. During the lockdown, hundreds of guests of the Gathering Place on Military Road could not avail of services like visiting the boutique to choose comfortable shoes to wear while walking around the city.

By July, The Gathering Place guests were in desperate need of footwear, particularly running shoes. Many were wearing well-worn winter boots in the summer heat. Susan Matthews of Taking Strides and a member of our Susan's running club, Athletics NorthEAST, held contactless sneaker drives all over the province.

"We collected between 500-750 pairs of shoes," Susan says. "I personally collected over 150 pairs. My children and I sorted mens' and ladies' by size in our driveway before bagging them up and delivering them to the new boutique."

CARE PACKAGES

Award-winning author, activist, and executive director of ArtForce, formerly For the Love of Learning, Gemma Hickey partnered that organization with other youth-serving groups and local restaurants to provide gourmet meals to those who would normally avail of closed food banks.

"THE STORIES IN THESE PAGES WILL TELL THE NEXT GENERATION OF WRITERS HOW TO SURVIVE AND EVEN THRIVE IN THE MOST DIFFICULT OF TIMES. NOT JUST WHAT THEY WROTE ABOUT OR HOW THEIR WORK WAS IMPACTED, BUT HOW THEY STEPPED UP."

when I got my hands on some unusually printed fabric. We raised over \$600 for a local agency helping at-risk youth. A friend gave me a whole bunch of fabric so I have been using that to make masks for another friend who is working with vulnerable populations. I'm planning another fundraiser for the fall."

Since the beginning of the pandemic. Martha's sewn hundreds of masks.

"Sewing masks gives me space in my head so my writing work can percolate. When I switch from the sewing machine to the computer, I'm more productive. Sewing masks is also a way for me to give



SPECIAL DELIVERY

“I contacted my friends at Merchant Tavern and Terre restaurants to see if we could partner on a project. Both restaurants offered me hot gourmet meals at a reduced rate. We bought them and distributed them to hundreds of youth in and around the metro area,” Gemma says. “Many of our youth have said lining up for food is hard on their self-esteem, not to mention risky because of Covid-19, so dropping them off care packages containing books, art supplies, snacks and hot meals from restaurants that they would never be able to afford, filled them up in more ways than one.”

DEDICATED TEAM

Another group who stepped up were those on the volunteer committee who create this magazine. When WANL asked us if we’d take up the task of putting out a second magazine in 2020 - this special COVID-19 edition - I was shocked not just to see my hand fly up, but those of my committee as well. Not one of them stepped back saying it would be too much work for too little reward. They each took on double the work for no pay and no personal benefit.

To the committee, the other helpers in this article, the writers who shared their stories, to the essential workers - from grocery store clerks to night nurses - I’m using this space to thank you. It’s for each of you I raise my hand. It’s your stories I want to read. Thank you for sharing them.



Photos (top to bottom): Gemma Hickey and the Merchant Tavern team delivering care packages to youth, a sample of Martha Muzychka’s masks, Susan Flanagan’s driveway during the shoe drive.

Alisha Morrissey is an award-winning professional writer, making money from words for more than 15 years. She started out in journalism and has worked in public policy, public relations, corporate communications, and marketing, making her writing as diverse as the people she works with. She is currently the Copy Director at Rogue Penguin Creative.

LET US GROW FORWARD

BECAUSE THERE'S NO USE GOING BACK

By AJ Ryan

In these interesting times there has been an underlying debate. Those who idle on social media will already be familiar. It is the question of whether we ought to be trying to “get back to normal,” or if, instead, we should concentrate on “going forward.” I, for one, have to agree with the latter. I don’t want to go back. That is hard to admit when there has been so much loss and suffering. One can feel selfish for admitting that any good came in such dark times. However, at this way-point in history, we must try to be mindful. There is no recovery from sorrow, injury, or destruction without going forward. Moving on does not mean forgetting all that has transpired. It is merely the refusal to be scared into a corner; not giving up.

ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD

When lock-down came, it was a relief. Yes, the dangers had been mounting outside our doors, but it was truly a relief to get a break. For me at least, there was gladness for having the space to breathe and the time for self-reflection. It was a time to learn, realize one’s truths, uncover spiritual paths, strengthen mindfulness, practice meditation, and increase one’s caring and understanding. It was a time for all that we never had time for back when things were “normal.” It was the time for this personal work because the only thing we really had was time.

I don’t want to go back because I have never been more socially aware. I feel that we are growing to be far more open and receptive of the plight of our fellow humans. It has been too long since we acted in such sweeping support; marching, standing together, speaking, listening, and lifting one another. The importance of protecting people, and helping

others has come to the forefront. Through the fog of what was once a stressful daily grind, the truth of what matters has begun to rise. My conscious desire to provide has strengthened. Donations, gifts, and words of kindness all come to mind easily.

I don’t want to go back because I have never been more personally aware. Mindfulness, empathy, meditation, and resilience. A time to discover what one truly does and does not like, rather than chasing the latest hobby, or the most popular knowledge of what used to be news. While sheltering in place, we had plenty of time with ourselves and our things. I found that the things surrounding me were not actually so important.

Rather, most of it was too much noise. I found I could live without much at all because what mattered were the things worth saving. Love, strength of character, understanding, knowledge, and the courage to face change and push open that box we’d always been thinking inside of.

‘GROWING WHILE STANDING STILL’

I don’t want to go back, because there has been so much good in my life, like never before. Many have tried cooking, or baking, even gardening. I expanded my garden, to try growing more vegetables. Every day there was joy, watching flowers



AJ Ryan’s first viola.

change, and sprouts reach higher towards the sky. Even watching the bugs and birds who shared the garden while I sat in the sunlight, feeling the cool breeze, and listened to the neighbors enjoying what they are growing too. A wonderful artist, producer, creator, and philanthropist, Noelle Stevenson recently shared a drawing with the words “Growing while standing still.” What a perfect phrase to describe these interesting times! My wish is that everyone takes this time, when you must seemingly stand still, to grow yourselves.

We can hide, bury our heads, and root ourselves to try and resist forward movement. Or we can accept the hardship of what has changed. When you take the time to grow, what blooms will you reveal?

AJ Ryan is a full-time freelance fiction editor, and writer. In her downtime, she reads more books, digs in the garden, or curls up to watch cartoons.

FISHY FUTURES ARE ALL THAT'S LEFT

By Daze Jeffries

Each time I've fled from the Bay of Exploits, I've given over precious secrets so my ghost won't be alone. She has lingered on the coast for a decade and then some, waiting for closure I could never comprehend. This winter of repeat-

ing double digits is different. Coughing up blackness from my lungs once again, I have surrendered my wish to keep living in Sin Jaws or settle down in the outport that raised me. Leaving her behind to struggle through the yearlong absence I desire isn't right. So, we are running away together – lost inside our emptiness and dreaming about release. Spirited ice-cov-

ered waters surround us. It's cold enough out here that I can't feel my fingers after six soundless minutes in the open ocean air. The truth is that my brain has painfully failed me. Who I am as a writer has come undone. I don't know how to get back there, and frankly, I don't want to return. This ending has already found its way.

“WHILE THE PROMISES I CLING TO OOOZE INSIDE OUT, THERE'S VERY LITTLE HEALING I CAN DO RIGHT NOW INSTEAD OF BEATING MYSELF UP OVER IT, I DISAPPEAR INTO THE FOG ON CAPE BRETON'S SOUTHWEST SHORE/PULLED INTO AN IMPOSSIBLE HOUSEWIFE'S DELUSION, I AM RUNNING OUT OF BREATH WITH A PHANTOM ON MY BACK/ALL THAT IS KNOWN TO ME FEELS LIKE OILY FIRES ON THE SURFACE OF A SUFFOCATED ANCIENT SEA – UNRELENTING BEINGS WHO BURN THEMSELVES OUT, TOO BUSY TO RECOGNIZE THE TROUBLE THAT AWAITS/THEN THERE'S THE ROLE YOU PLAY IN ALL OF THIS/YES, I AM HURTING LIKE A LOST ADOLESCENT, BUT I WANT OUR LOVE TO SEE ANOTHER DRIZZLY SEASON CRAVE YOUR SILLINESS AND SOFT-HEARTED TOUCH/YET YOU NEED ME TO BE IN HIGH SPIRITS ALL THE TIME, AND IT ISN'T REALISTIC WHEN I LIVE WITH THIS MUCH SORROW THAT'S THE FACT OF MY SUBDUING AND TRANSEXUAL PAST – YOU KNOW WHAT THAT PORT CITY PUT ME THROUGH/IN THE MORNING WE MURMUR AND TURN AWAY, EACH OF US SWALLOWING OUR OWN RICH VOMIT/BABY, WE ARE SICK ENOUGH/AND NOW THERE'S THE VIRUS TAKING US APART.”

How can I let go of this wounded illusion? How do I keep writing through earthly collapse? Everything is slowing down and turning into study – if it isn't meant to sway me it is bound to fade away. My ghost gives me time to take in the strange enchantment of this unfamiliar time warp and wild water-land.

What I find are tiny footprints and decaying mounds of beach kelp that linger here like wayward souls for miles in the margins. Gently, I step out into silent rural spaces and my overflowing body breaks from its captive hold. In crisis, I learn to put my feelings on the page and begin to resist these ecologies of failure. This is to

say that my lifegiving project of wording a world is what sets me free. Still, there is a weakness and a dream that I'm forgetting. How could things be different at a moment like this? Even though we start to love each other better, fishy futures are all that's left.

Daze Jeffries is a multidisciplinary artist-poet-researcher from Beothuk territory in the Bay of Exploits whose research-creation and writing have been published in Canadian anthologies and journals, as well as exhibited and performed at artist-run centres and galleries nationally. She holds a Master of Gender Studies in trans and sex work history from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

THE CONTEMPORARY NATURE OF HISTORICAL FICTION



Author Paul Butler

By Paul Butler

Historical novelists might have a special advantage when it comes to making sense of a challenge like the present pandemic. Consciously or otherwise, this genre draws from the well of collective imagination not only in its choice of storyline, but also in its choice of setting. And this, in turn, is never the result of mere coincidence but something that hovers in the ether around us.

A quick perusal through some of my favourite historical novels reveals that the stories are as much about the time in which they are written as they are about their setting. It's the connection between the two eras that best reveals the themes and uncovers the most important insights into society and human nature.

FERVOR RISES

Consider Steven Heighton's *Afterlands* published in 2007. Heighton explores the aftermath of the doomed *Polaris* expedition through the visions of two 'polar'-opposite characters, the ship's captain George Tyson and crewmember, Kruger. As the *Polaris* remains trapped on a rapidly shrinking ice-pan, nationalistic fervour rises between different Euro-

pean and American factions. An Inuit family, Tukulito, her husband and her daughter, quietly keep the fractious parties alive by hunting and imparting a knowledge of how to survive the cold.

When Tyson later publishes a version of the events besmirching Tukulito and ignoring her

family's contribution, Kruger, who finds he can only be at ease among Indigenous peoples, tries to make him account for his mendacity. *Afterlands* addresses both the 1870s with its fervent nationalism and also the early 21st century with its polarised views of Indigenous rights. The philosophical battle at its core is entirely current.

TRAGIC WASTE

Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (2007) takes its setting (1963) from a Philip Larkin poem, *Annus Mirabilis*. The poem begins:

*Sexual intercourse began
(which was rather late for me) –
Between the end of the "Chatterley" ban
And the Beatles' first LP*

We meet two young people who love each other but are about to make such a disaster of their wedding night, due to trepidation on one side and unresolved trauma on the other, they split immediately and never see each other again. It is a novel about the tragic waste caused by sexual repression and it's also a story of

our own era. Repressive forces still exert their influence on vulnerable people with, for one example, the continued practice of 'conversion therapy.'

PICTURE OF A MODERN NATION

Sarah Waters's *The Little Stranger* set in late 1940s Britain and follows a working-class-born general practitioner, Dr Faraday, who begins to treat the Ayres household for whom his mother was once a servant. The scale of Faraday's ambitions is greater than even he realizes. A series of paranormal happenings pick off those members of the family who stand between him and a marriage which will see him lord of the manor.

Given current voting patterns - most British government ministers are still graduates of Eton and a few other exclusive private schools - Dr. Faraday, with his obsequious desire to serve and his unconscious fury, is as much a picture of the modern nation as he is of the immediate post-war era.

Closer to home, most Newfoundlanders will recognize in Wayne Johnston's *Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (1998) that the train journey across the island at the novel's beginning and end are metaphors of division not only about Confederation but also about the enduring lack of emotional, if not political, resolution since.

The most poignant, telling part of any historical novel is the one that addresses us directly in the era we inhabit.

We can't guess what might come from this genre when it comes to digesting the significance of the coronavirus pandemic, and what insights might be drawn from comparing our time to another. But it will be fascinating to see.

Paul Butler is the author of *Mina's Child* (Inanna Publications), a novel which follows the next generation on from Dracula's heroes as they doubt their elders' story of women's demon sexuality and an evil foreigner preying upon virtuous people.

THE END OF DAYS

*At the end of days,
at days end
I'm not convinced that our journey is over,
I'm only convinced that our adventure has just begun.*

*There are many more sunrises to force our sleepy eyes to
open and many more full moons to hush us to sleep at
night.*

*Many more sidewalk cracks to catch our toes as we stroll
and many more rainy, drizzly, fog filled days to come.*

*Of dropped ice cream cones at Lakeside
and pints at the Ship to be drunk.*

*And hugs shared at Bannerman as we sit
in carted umbrella chairs listening and laughing.*

*And we will see each other again
And together we'll count our blessing everyone.*

*And we'll ride off into the humid mornings
to Ochi's Pit Cove and Brigus and Western Bay
and New Amherst and Burnside some day soon.*

*So much more love on the run.
At the end of the day
at days end
I'm not convinced that our journey is over
no my loves and friends,
I'm only convinced our adventure has only just
begun.*

Ellen Reid is an award-winning St John's based writer and visual artist. The submitted photograph was taken at the absolutely empty Anglican Cathedral of St John the Baptist on the morning of March 20th, 2020 at the beginning of the shut down and inspired the poetry featured in this issue.

AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

THE MOST DIFFICULT THING TO WRITE

By Natalie Budessa

The most important piece of writing I did during the pandemic was an obituary.

When COVID hit, like many others, I took advantage of the increased time available to write at home. As a native Californian, I found Newfoundland winters challenging and was soon spending more time indoors. I began a novel during Snowmageddon and sent photos of the massive amounts of snow to my family and friends – in particular to my uncle, who lived in Montenegro. We exchanged sparse messages in Serbian from time to time, and I took pride that my attempt at learning my mother’s native language was being put to use.

When my uncle passed, my mother asked me to write an obituary online to commemorate him and notify friends of the news. English is her second language, so her writing is not the strongest. But it surprised me somewhat that she asked me, rather than my sisters—that I had retained the reputation as the writer in our family when no one has seen any of my work for years. Still, I knew an obituary wouldn’t be easy, especially when we were not able to have a proper goodbye.



Natalie Budessa

“HOW DO YOU CAPTURE
SOMEONE’S LIFE
IN A FEW SIMPLE
PARAGRAPHS?”

LONG DISTANCE CONNECTIONS

As I continued to write my novel and compare COVID conditions with my uncle, we found out that he was diagnosed with lung cancer. As it became clearer that he didn’t have much time left, my family tried to figure out how we could be there with him. However, due to COVID travel restrictions, we learned we were not able to enter Montenegro. This was especially hard on my mom, my uncle’s only sibling.

ABSENCE OF WORDS

How do you capture someone’s life in a few simple paragraphs? My mom had a rough outline of what she wanted to say in Serbian. I had an Internet search pulled up on common obituary formats in English. We met in the middle, using Google Translate when my mother’s native language was beyond my understanding. We tried to capture my uncle’s quirky sense of humor in a two line story.

We thanked my uncle’s friend and neighbor, who showed our family true kindness by being at my uncle’s side until the end. The absence of words haunted my mother. Her brother never married and never maintained a serious relationship—was he ever in love? When I wrote a line saying my uncle was finally at peace, I think my mother found her own peace, even though she couldn’t be there.

WHO TELLS YOUR STORY?

I have been listening to the Hamilton soundtrack a lot lately as I write. There is a song at the end that asks the question, “Who tells your story?” This experience taught me the importance of writers in times of hardships like this one. Not only do writers (and other creators) entertain and keep us sane, they are tasked with writing the stories of our lives, determining what is remembered and what is forgotten. They can even give people second lives, as I feel I’m doing with a character in my novel inspired by my uncle.

ESSENTIAL OFFERING

My parents and two sisters are all considered essential workers during this pandemic. As a writer preparing for grad school, I am not. However, when my mom turned to me to write my uncle’s obituary, I felt essential.

Natalie is an American living in Newfoundland with her husband. She loves everything related to travel, art, and cats and hopes to publish a novel someday.

THE LIFE OF A PANDEMIC WRITER AND MOM

By Candace Osmond

Being a full-time writer is a dream come true. I get to do the one thing I'm actually good at while working from home, and I get paid to do it! Sounds like it's too sweet to be true. And it kinda was...until a global pandemic happened and completely turned my world upside down.

I know everyone has been affected by COVID-19 in different ways; parents and essential workers having to remain in the public, teachers moving from a class to a screen and healthcare workers fighting to save more lives than they can handle. It's a lot, and the world will never be the same.

The pandemic hasn't affected me too badly. But it has forced me to re-think the way I work and live, especially with a husband who also works full-time from home and two elementary aged kids in the house. Every. Single. Day. All. Day. Here's how I've been coping, staying on top of my writing schedule and commitments.

THROW EVERYTHING OUT THE WINDOW

From March to June, my husband and I found ourselves having to wear teachers' hats. Between us, we stayed on top of Math, Reading, and other subjects. Our daily work schedules were out the window, so we divided the time. I trained myself to get up earlier, so I could get as much done by lunchtime as I could, while hubby tended to the kids. Then, at noon, we switched, and I played Teacher Mom until supertime.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE NIGHT

My writing commitments consist of freelance services and my own fiction that I publish under Guardian Publishing. It was hard to balance both worlds

before the pandemic, but back in March it became near impossible. So, I divided every minute of available time I had outside of parenting. During the mornings, I'd tackle my daily word goal for my latest book. Once the kids were in bed, I'd take a few hours to stay on top of my freelance work and end the night relaxing with my husband.

THE TAKEAWAY

While it might seem like we managed to rearrange our entire lives to accommodate the roadblocks COVID-19 threw at us, there was one aspect of my life that suffered greatly and there was nothing I could do about it. SLEEP. Later nights and earlier mornings cost me sleep, but ensured I could fit in work, writing, parenting, teaching, and a little personal time.

WHAT HAVE I BEEN DOING FOR FUN?

Between the lockdown and the social distancing, our options for fun outside of the house have been limited. I thank the universe every day that this crisis happened during the Spring and Summer. Our beautiful province has so many awesome outdoor things to do. We spent some time at our cabin, went for bike rides, walked hiking trails, beachcombed, etc. Plus, we geared up our backyard with a pool, veggie garden, swing set, and a treehouse. Needless to say, we haven't been bored!

BOTTOMLINE

The global pandemic has, and still is, an unfortunate turn of events for 2020. But the moment I stopped and said to myself, "Okay, I know all the ways this



Candace Osmond

is horrible. But how can I make it work? How can I make it...not so horrible?", was when things just fell into place and began to work. I know that's not the case for everyone but give it a try! Stop and look at things in an almost backwards way. Search for the pockets of possibilities and make them work.

Candace Osmond is a #1 International & USA TODAY Bestselling Author and Award-Winning Screenwriter. She resides on the rocky east coast of Canada with her husband and two kids.

WHAT'S ANOTHER WORD FOR PANDEMIC

HOW HAS OUR LANGUAGE CHANGED AS A RESULT OF COVID-19?

By Ainsley Hawthorn

Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote that language is a game, a game whose rules are slowly, but constantly, changing.

As writers, regardless of field, our calling is to become masters of this game so that we can predict which balls our readers will be able to catch and which will fly over their heads. We anticipate reader knowledge so that we can work within or build on it. COVID-19 hasn't just disrupted our health and routines – it's changed the rules of the game.

WE'RE ALL PLAYING

The vocabulary known to each of us is dictated not only by our education level but by our needs, careers, and habits. We pick up words while shopping, reading the news, watching TV. We learn jargon from our colleagues; we learn slang from our peers. When something new becomes significant in our lives, we acquire

the terms that will enable us to discuss it with others and wrap our minds around it.

Have you spoken to someone with a chronic medical condition?

Though they may not be physicians, they will usually be well versed in medical terminology related to their issue. There's something startling about hearing a non-specialist tell you they had a cholecystectomy because of their biliary dyskinesia that reminds you how adept our minds are at sponging up new vocabulary.

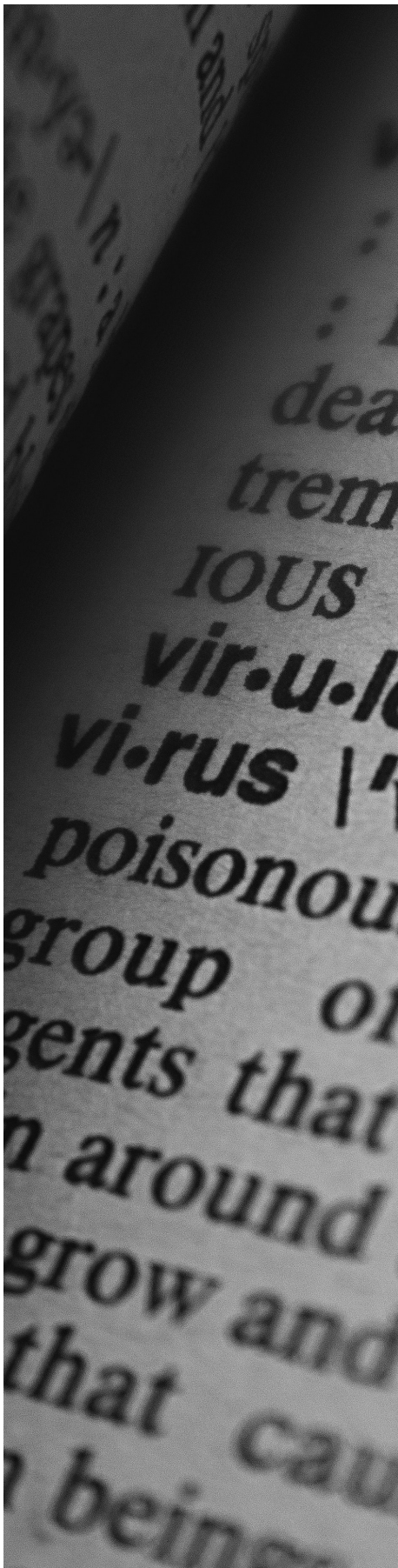
IN THE VERNACULAR

In spring 2020, we all had to become small-time medical experts. When COVID-19 reached pandemic status, there was a pressing need to communicate about symptoms, disease spread, and prevention measures, not only among health professionals but between health professionals and public. Medical knowledge previously relevant to a small number of people was suddenly indispensable to everyone.



Dr. Ainsley Hawthorn





DEFINING A PANDEMIC

Would we have been able to define “pandemic” in 2019? Now we’re all conversant in PPE, community spread, and contact tracing. We drop the words “asymptomatic” and “immunocompromised” like we’re talking about the weather.

We’ve learned the difference between quarantine and isolation, respirator and ventilator. We debate whether “physical distancing” should replace “social distancing” because of its less lonesome connotations.

LOCAL COLOQUIALISMS

Though much of the worldwide crash course in the vocabulary of epidemiology has been universal, we’ve managed to develop a few regionalisms. Have you seen a map showing what a summer home is called in different parts of Canada, illustrating that a “cabin” in Newfoundland and Labrador is a “chalet” in Quebec, a “cottage” in most of Ontario, and a “bungalow” in Cape Breton? Likewise, what we in Newfoundland and Labrador call a “bubble” is a “social circle” to Ontarians and a “cohort” to Albertans.

NOVEL CORONA-ISMS

While public health officials have been repurposing old words to serve new ends, the rest of us have been coining slang that more colourfully captures our bizarre circumstances. Mavericks who refuse to follow public health guidelines have been dubbed “covidiot.” As much

of the United States entered lockdown, sex advice podcaster and noted neologist Dan Savage asked two listeners if they had chosen a “Quarantine” (rhymes with “Valentine”) to spend their manda-

“WE DROP THE WORDS ‘ASYMPTOMATIC’
AND ‘IMMUNOCOMPROMISED’ LIKE WE’RE
TALKING ABOUT THE WEATHER.”

tory “coronation” with. In a year when disaster seems to follow disaster, the pre-existing term “doom-scrolling,” scanning through endless bad news on social media, has taken off.

THE REAL WINNERS

For writers, rapid expansion of the average person’s knowledgebase has forever altered what we can expect from our readers. The shared vernacular of COVID-19 allows us to write more concisely about this pandemic, but it has also modified the connotations of common words and reshaped our collective imaginary. The meanings the public gleans from literary works will never be quite the same. The goalposts may have moved, but the game goes on.

Ainsley Hawthorn, Ph.D., is a non-fiction author and cultural historian based in St. John’s. She is currently completing two books – *Land of Many Shores: Stories from a Diverse Newfoundland and Labrador*, coming in 2021 from Breakwater, and *The Other Five Senses*, represented by the Margret McBride Literary Agency.

IN QUARANTINE

*My parents spent their whole lives
"locked down." Father in the mines.
Mother in the kitchen bottling jams and jellies.*

*Father longed to visit Ireland and whistled
Galway Bay when he fried eggs and bacon.*

Mother dreamed of leaving him

But found solace in her flower garden.

*No one traveled then. No big trips
To Daisy Land or Spain. No dreams*

Of Caribbean beaches at Easter.

Once we drove to the Pacific.

Saw mountains scrape the sky

And the sunset turn orange over China.

Surrounded by bush we were always

In quarantine. No viruses then.

Only broken backs and bank accounts.

*Encyclopedias full of far away places
Locked down behind a glass-doored bookcase.*

Dan Murphy is an educator, author, and poet who lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. His poetry has appeared in journals, anthologies and online in Canada, the United States of America, Ireland and Great Britain.

THE FLOOD

*Although the dam broke suddenly
the truth is, the flood was approaching for months.
Tiny leaks, and punctures hiding in crevices
began to glare at me when I walked into a room.
Slowly, a shift; In a moment
I am peeling an apple, the aroma fresh and sweet.
In another, the cut of the blade and
blood leaves a trail into my sink.
Splinters begin to show in our routine:
I move the kids into our room.
Consoled by the rhythm of their breath, their
dreams dancing unaffected on our bed.
My own sleep is fitful.
I dream I wash my hands at your sink.
The water rushes so fast it overflows the basin.
Panic rising in my chest
the faucets give me nothing when I turn them.
The marble cracks and I watch the lines spread
like I am watching someone's progress on a map.
Just as the flood threatens to suffocate me
the vanity crumbles into a pebble beach beneath my feet.
I am saved by this novel island, yet
I wake filled with regret.
The illness has changed everything.
My daily attentions replaced with your protection.
Where once I covered you with sunscreen
before your feet ran out the door.
Now I shield you from this torrent,
all things different than before.
As quick as a sigh, the ground begins to quake.
Our portraits shudder and tilt upon the walls.
We walk a thin line, on a foundation made of time
that only yesterday was strong.*

Sarah Stuart is a mother and writer living in Paradise, Newfoundland. She has an hon-our's degree in Information and Media Studies from the University of Western Ontario, and recently completed a post-graduate certificate in creative writing from Humber. She is currently studying poetry at Memorial. Most days, you can find her at the rink either reading, knitting, or pondering her next poem.



Photo by fotograferende

WRITING AROUND THE PANDEMIC

THE STIMULUS FOR CREATION

By Andrew Peacock

The world has been turned on its head in ways beyond anything that most of us can remember. Diseases in the recent past have worried us, but nothing has changed us like COVID-19.

Writing is a lonely profession. For hours every day, writers sit alone in quiet rooms putting words on paper. With this kind of life, it seems that enforced isolation shouldn't make much difference. Perhaps our work might even be helped by removing some of our excuses not to write. There are fewer friends to visit or trips to the store. There are times when it seems that all we can do is sit alone in a room.

FROM THE INSIDE OUT

But the truth is, that many of the distractions we suffer have nothing to do with invasions of solitude. Even in lockdown we can waste time on the Internet or straightening books on a shelf. The pandemic may not have changed much in the working life of a writer, but it hasn't removed our real obstacles.

Stories come from inside ourselves, but the motivating ideas come from our real day-to-day lives. When our existence is narrowed, it is possible that our thoughts may diminish in the same manner.

Many writers find it difficult to write

during these strange times. The usual story is that when the pandemic started there was a surge of creative energy. Being restricted in movement meant that there was more opportunity to sit quietly. That calmness at first was an opportunity to create. However, as time dragged on, many of us have suffered from some degree of apathy or even depression. Being kept from our friends and family has a cost. The resulting unhappiness and malaise can make it hard to create.

LIFE INTERRUPTED

Along with the problems of our enforced isolation, I think there are oppor-

tunities for writers in these times. It might take more effort to write when our world is upset, but there is an upside.

Margaret Atwood has suggested that a story happens when life is interrupted. Most good stories are not about normal existence. If we wrote down exactly what happened to us on the most routine days of our lives, few would be interested in reading our work. Even with the most florid of writing, it is difficult to make the mundane worthy of ink.

If there ever was a time when our lives were interrupted, it is now. Very little is normal. By Atwood's definition, we are living out stories. This simple thought can be the stimulus for creation.

REACTION TO SOLITUDE

If we think hard enough, we can see the allure of what is happening right now. The challenges of enforced proximity or separation are worthy of stories. Every day in the news we hear of people's reactions to their solitude. We have been given a situation that is ripe for fiction. It doesn't take much exaggeration to develop a plot based on the stories of ordi-

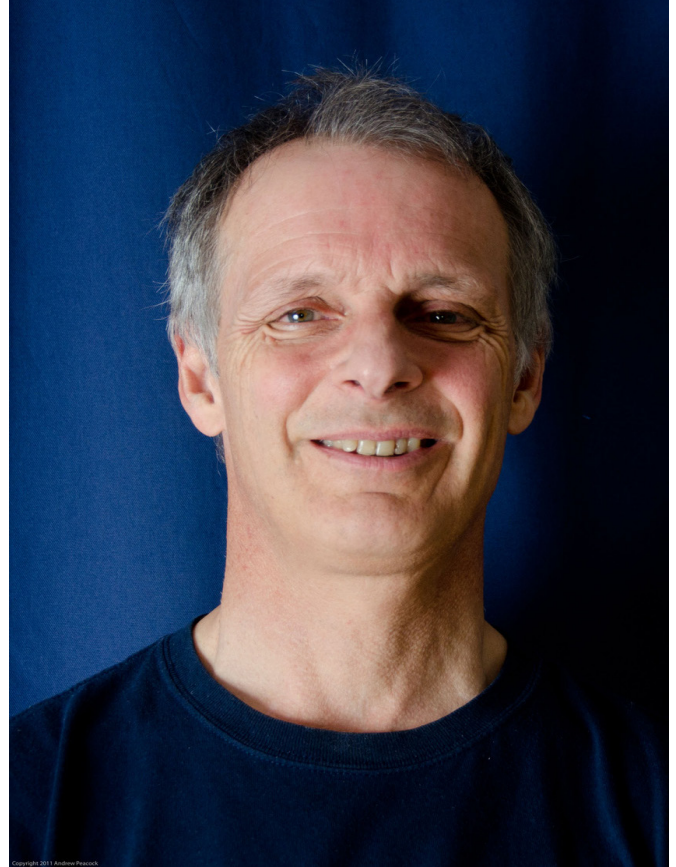
nary lives in pandemic times.

Many of us have strong ideas about how the governments here and in other places have reacted to COVID-19. As individuals and societies, we have been asked to make decisions that place our individual comfort against the safety of people we don't even know. This is surely grist for a novel.

THE NEED FOR ART

For the more literal minded of us there is the temptation to write about disease outbreaks. We've seen movies

like *Pandemic* become the most popular entertainment on Netflix. British author



Andrew Peacock

Peter May wrote a pandemic novel called *Lockdown* ten years ago and was unable to get it published. With the onset of COVID-19, there was a race to get the book on the shelves.

Pandemic novels come in all types. There are potboilers like the previously mentioned *Lockdown* and more literary efforts like Emily St. John Mandel's wonderful *Station Eleven*. Her book combines a science-fiction-like description of a disease that ravages the planet with a thoughtful meditation on the need for art in our society.

The limitations placed on our lives by COVID-19 can either limit or enhance our writing or our life in general. What we make of the pandemic is our choice.

“ALONG WITH THE PROBLEMS OF OUR ENFORCED ISOLATION, I THINK THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WRITERS IN THESE TIMES. IT MIGHT TAKE MORE EFFORT TO WRITE WHEN OUR WORD IS UPSET, BUT THERE IS AN UPSIDE.”

After a career in veterinary medicine, **Andrew Peacock's** first book *Creatures of the Rock* won the NL Book Awards prize for non-fiction and was long listed for the Leacock Medal for humour. His eerily prescient pandemic novel, *Viral* was written before the predicament we are currently in.

HOW TO SUCCEED AT SKIP-BO BY REALLY, REALLY TRYING

By Hannah Jenkins

When Covid-19 hit Newfoundland, I was forced out of the dorm room that had become my home. I haphazardly shoved clothes and notebooks into suitcases and eventually found myself living with my grandparents in Twillingate. Every night without fail we'd play two games of Skip-Bo.

And every round without fail my Pop would ask my Nan, "Frances, maid, do you got the next number?"

And my Nan, without fail, would say, "Eddie, b'y, don't you think if I had the next number, I would put it out?"

And every night without fail I'd say, "Pop! Remember to play the card on your pile first!"

And every night without fail he'd forget at least once. So, my Nan and I slid over a card like cavalry to his paper battlements and call it an easy victory.

"You must be doing it on purpose," my Nan told him one night, "to do it this often."

It's alright, I want to tell him, I forget things too.

SHUFFLING THE DECK

When the pandemic first hit, I had forgotten what upheaval was. I had tucked it away in the recesses of my brain. I always had a meeting to attend, a paper to write, a presentation to give; I didn't have the time for worst-case scenarios. So, when this thing came, looming and silent, I nodded at it like a stranger on the street - knowing I shouldn't get too close, not yet fearing it exactly.

I had forgotten what heartbreak was until it hit. I hadn't felt it in so long it had

shriveled up like a plucked daisy abandoned on a well-worn path; its petals scattered to the wind. He loves me, the breeze whispered.

Until my boyfriend told me, "Darling, I don't think I can love you from this far away. There is just too much space between us

DRAW FOUR

When it first hit, I had forgotten what silence sounded like. I had been so busy for so long I did not know its ring when it called. I broke the quiet with the catharsis of crinkling chip bags and the distant voices of Netflix somewhere on the other side of an expanse of bed. Soon, stretch

marks burgeoned over my skin: the manifestation of silence and stillness on a human form.

I imagine my 2019 self, walking into my room, sweaty from the gym, already browsing through the half-completed to-do list on her phone. That version of

me remembered to take her antidepressants. She looks around at the crumbs and the closed curtains and says, "Isn't there something you should be doing right now? What are your plans? Don't you have anything of note to give to the world?"

I am learning to say, "*When I have them, I will put them out. These are the cards I have been dealt. The edges are beginning to fray, and the colors are wearing down. But I am playing them the best I can.*"



Photo by fotograferende

Hannah Jenkins is a writer and student currently studying English Language and Literature at Grenfell Campus, with hopes of publishing her first poetry chapbook in the near future. She is the recipient of the 2020 Moynes-Keshen John McCrae Poetry Award, as well as, the winner of the February 2020 Engen Books Kit Sora Flash Fiction Contest.

DIRECTIONALLY CHALLENGED

FINDING A NEW ROUTE TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD

By Linda Chafe

It's a dazzling blue-sky summer 2020 morning in the east end of St. John's.

Tourists to the city can find it intoxicating to witness summer fog roll in and out of the narrows, bringing with it suddenly plummeting temperatures and leaving them shivering in their shorts and tank tops. But after enduring this year's long, cold winter, Snowmageddon and now the pandemic, any warm fogless day feels like a miracle. Naturally, this summer of Covid-19 brings few visitors.

As for me I am taking full advantage of Stay at Home Year, Atlantic Bubble or not.

DAILY CONSTITUTIONAL

To keep active and stress as little as possible about the pandemic, I've continued my habit of taking countless walks on our city's scenic trails, mostly solo since March. The desire to get outdoors into the fresh air and see people who exist outside my bubble, even if I can only smile, wave or say hello from at least six feet away, has been irresistible.

I glance at my laptop. My short story sits in mid-completion, as it has for weeks. I pause in front of it, trying to imagine the direction the story should take. But instead of sitting down to force myself to write, I lace up my sneakers and dab on some sunscreen. Grabbing my sunglasses and hat I step out the door.

GOING THE WRONG WAY

I decide to walk at my customary pre-pandemic haunt, Quidi Vidi Lake. Since March I have avoided the lake, preferring other area trails or even sidewalks where I can choose my own route. I dislike someone dictating which way I'm allowed to

walk, or how to do anything else, for that matter. Everyone marching around the lake in a uniform direction simply seems weird. And it is the opposite of my preferred direction. It feels like being forced into going the wrong way.

I arrive at the lake and, fearing reprisals from other walkers lest I comply, I set out clockwise as decreed. I welcome the warmth of the sun, the feel of the wind, the calls of ducks and seagulls, and am soon enjoying the steady rhythm of my walk. But seeing only the backs of the other walkers on the trail instead of their smiles and noting occasional looks of irritation or even a little fear as I pass a few of them takes some of the joy away.

ANCIENT ROUTES

As I walk, I notice that some of the COVID-19 directional signs placed around the trail have had the preprinted notices of proclaimed walking direction either blown or torn off. In their place someone has hand-drawn thick arrows.

These simple arrows are reminiscent of a trek a friend and I completed together on the last 100 kilometers of the Camino de Santiago trail in Spain five years ago. Those ancient routes are also marked by arrows – yellow arrows roughly painted everywhere, on buildings, stones, roads or depicted on concrete pillars shaped much like the temporary wooden signs at Quidi Vidi.

THE RIGHT DIRECTION

On the famous Camino, the arrows are a welcome sight, assuring thousands of pilgrims that they are heading in the right direction toward their destination. Suddenly I am no longer as bothered by



Linda Chafe

having to walk clockwise along with everyone else. Instead I realize the signs are an attempt to point our collective way to mental and physical health while we wait for an effective vaccine or treatment, or for the pandemic to just end already.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

My cell phone buzzes in my pocket. A friend, asking if I'd like to walk the Signal Hill North Head Trail with her the next day. We're in Phase 2 with few active cases, and eager for friendship and unparalleled scenery I tell her yes, absolutely. "Great," she replies, "but be aware that we can only walk in the wrong direction, clockwise down the long stairs from the top of the hill, instead of coming up those stairs as we usually would."

"I know," I reply. "It might be good to see the view from a different perspective."

The walk was terrific. But I still miss going my own way.

After a career in the business world, **Linda Chafe** is exploring her creativity including writing and music. She loves a good walking trail.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE; I TOOK THEE FOR MY OFFICEMATE



By Connie Boland

Bacon! Sizzling, crackling in the pan, bacon. When his office closed in March, my Significant Other came home, and he brought the bacon with him.

Packages and packages of salt-cured pork. Every day for two months we sat down to a mid-morning feast of extra crispy, curly bacon. Our resident chef filled mismatched plates with eggs scrambled in bacon fat. Delicious, yellow butter melted into thick slices of golden-brown toast. Mugs of perked coffee were sweetened with heaping teaspoons of granulated sugar, and full-fat cream.

Hot, sputtering Canadian bacon was the star of the show.

Five months later, as I pace through another kilometre on the treadmill, I wonder if I should have fought harder, protested more, advocated for oatmeal, fat-free yogurt, and seedless grapefruit juice. Squeezed out a plume of air freshener when that first hint of lightly charred deliciousness floated downstairs and crept

under my closed office door. Reached for a chew of gum to soak up the saliva when my soft pants grew tight around my thighs. I was powerless against all that comfort food goodness. Resistance was futile. Bacon made up for the abrupt change in my routine.

BEFORE THERE WAS BACON

Pre-Covid, the animals and I had it made. After a round of 7 a.m. feedings and bathroom visits, we retired to our respective corners. The cat coiled like a corkscrew into a deep groove in the couch. The dog stretched out, paws in the air, crisscross on our king-sized bed. I worked in the basement. The rhythmic purr of the spin cycle, the hum of the dryer, the click of computer keys kept me company. It was quiet. There were no surprises. The house had a peaceful, easy vibe.

There was no bacon.

CLOSING RANKS

Our daughter was the first to come home. Her university closed. Classes moved online. Our kitchen table was buried under a mound of pharmacology and pathophysiology textbooks. She introduced me to TikToc videos, and Tiger King. We drank iced coffee and watched daily COVID-19 updates.

My Significant Other showed up a week later, his workplace shutting down and the employees tasked with working from home. He established an office in our spare room. The child-sized desk rescued from our shed creaked under the weight of two overlarge computer monitors and a high-tech Mac. Meetings were arranged. There was a lot of loud office

talk. The cat fled into the laundry room. The dog curled up under Significant Other's makeshift desk.

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES

Our house in Corner Brook was suddenly crowded, complicated and chaotic. Footsteps pounded the floor over my head as Significant Other paced the perimeter, lost in conversation, breaking my concentration. One memorable afternoon, I barged in on an executive Zoom meeting. Reversing my inward momentum, I silently vowed to comb my hair daily, and dress appropriately.

We ran out of toilet paper, and paper towels.

I threatened to implement Human Resource measures when my "co-workers" left crusty dishes in the sink, milk stains on the counter, and globs of bacon grease on the floor. Posters warning of potential Occupational Health and Safety issues were taped to bathroom walls. Textbooks were banned from the kitchen table, and a meeting was held to discuss office etiquette.

And then things changed again. Our daughter formed a study-buddy bubble. Significant Other went back to the office. When I thumped upstairs to share the latest bit of exciting freelance writer news, there was no one there. No coffee growing cold in the percolator. No tinny sound of online voices. No ikToc videos. No gatherings in the living room.

We keep the rickety desk in the spare room, just in case. The dog lazily opens an unconcerned, sleepy eye at the sound of my voice. The cat doesn't move at all. Sometimes I miss the bacon.

The End.

Connie Boland is a writer and award-winning journalist living in Corner Brook. Her work has been published in *Downhome*, *Club Manager Quarterly*, *Saltscapes*, and *Today's Parent* magazines. To counteract the impact of eating all that bacon, Connie spent the winter snowshoeing and hiking in the Bay of Islands.

FLOWERS

By Janine White

Loss. Loss of time. Loss of hope. Loss of freedom. Loss of companionship. Loss of peace of mind.

I feel lost.

It's one word that adequately represents the last four months. Despite my attempts to stay positive, to come up with things I *can* do, I inevitably revert to things I cannot. Trying to deny those feelings has been detrimental to my psyche.

I don't mean to sound whiny, like some spoiled brat who's lost her car for the weekend. I am fortunate the tragedies of this time have not reached my circle.

But they are everywhere, and those not related to this disease are compounded by it. It's impossible to look upon them, and not be changed.

I wonder what we will be when this time is but a memory. Will it impact us so much we lose some of ourselves? Our whimsy, our spontaneity, our openness to those around us? Right now, there is a stalker: it's around every supermarket aisle, every neighbour's tree, every mask. We are living in a time of the unknown. When we are not in control of our destiny. And that is, perhaps, the most frightening of all.

AN INHERITED GARDEN

We moved into a new home last fall, and with it, inherited a garden. For the first time in my life, I find myself tending weeds, and watering perennials. All winter, I waited for snow to melt. All spring,

I waited for buds to bloom. Their colours and fragrances made me smile out loud. They warmed my heart and restored my soul.

And then, they were gone. Just as quickly as they appeared, they began to fade. Downpours of rain swatted them to the ground. Petals wilted and scattered. But they are hanging on, a few blossoms yet to burgeon. The promise of imminent beauty.

LIFE WILL OUT

I realize these jewels of nature are trying to tell me something. They persevere through snow, frost, rain, heat, and neglect, so they may rise again in wonder, and delight. Back in the spring, it took

a lot of digging to discover them under the weight of last year's deadfall. They came to life with abandon. Shoots grew tall, and incredible treasures sprang forth. They were not to be denied.

I hope we can be like the flowers and bushes in my garden.

We must face whatever transpires, knowing our liberation is at hand. Once the deadfall has been lifted, our dormancy will end, and we will find ways to adjust to the life that awaits.

"The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that," Robert Fulghum wrote.

Flowers don't think; they just do. The

challenge lies in our winter. To remain strong and resilient. To find breath in this indefinite limbo. This forced slowdown made us look at little things differently, and hopefully big things too. We might realize little things are actually big. That life's greatest gifts have never really gone away.

Our spring shall come.

“THE ROOTS GO DOWN AND THE
PLANT GOES UP AND NOBODY
REALLY KNOWS HOW OR WHY, BUT
WE ARE ALL LIKE THAT.”

— Robert Fulghum



Janine White is originally from Ferryland, and currently resides in Paradise, with her husband, Craig, and her dog, Orka. Janine is a music and language teacher with the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. In her spare time, she loves to read murder mysteries, and make music with her friends. She/Her, Tea/Wine.

COVID AND CREATIVITY

By Mark C. Hunter

The alarm used to go off at 6:30 am. I would stagger out of bed, feed the cats, feed myself, FaceTime with my girlfriend Ellen, get in my car and drive 15 minutes to work and spend the day researching, writing, and providing policy advice.

Things started to change in late December and early January. Disruption. A wave of change. In amongst the snowstorm warnings and Snowmageddon (clearly a practice shutdown for the big event), the occasional story about a strange pneumonia somewhere in China crept into my consciousness. I was a historian in a former life, did research on the Great War, and of course had come across the historical flu pandemic many times. I didn't like the sounds of a new pneumonia, now known as COVID-19. I slowly started to buy extra groceries with every grocery run, bought a few face masks, and more hand sanitizer, just in case.

FRIDAY THE 13TH

The last day I worked in the office was March 13th, a Friday no less. The tension in the air was palpable that week. It felt like a sci-fi movie where the alien spaceship was entering the atmosphere and the humans were all scurrying to gather up their belongings before the attack started. I took my laptop home that Friday to test it on my home network and make sure the VPN worked. I returned briefly to the office on Monday because I had grabbed the wrong power adapter. That evening I picked up my girlfriend from her work and loaded my car with her belongings. Neither one of us knew when or if "normal" would ever return.

BUILDING THE BUBBLE

We were scared. We had experienced the separation of Snowmageddon. A hor-

rible 10 days where we were trapped in our houses and unable to see each other except over FaceTime. We swore then that if something like that ever happened again, we wouldn't stay separated. We didn't think we would face the choice again so soon.

According to the Chief Medical Officer of Health, people were to stay home in their own houses. I live by myself with my two cats. During the lockdown for COVID-19, I saw no one other than Ellen. One household under two roofs, as Ellen calls it. How to cope with COVID-19? Our creative outlets had been shut down. No LSPU Hall. No Treble or Distortion - bars in Holdsworth Court that hosted poetry, spoken word, comedy, drag, music, and variety shows.

MISS ELLEN COMES TO TOWN

We turned to the Internet as a creative platform and Ellen created the character of, and was the creative force behind, Miss Ellen. First, we filmed episodes called Miss Ellen is Bored. Missing all her preschool friends, Miss Ellen wondered what to do during those long, isolated days in March and early April. Miss Ellen is Bored episodes featured story times for young children, singing, and activities.

We filmed about twenty episodes before various publishers issued copyright guidance for reading stories over the Internet during the pandemic. We de-



A screenshot of Miss Ellen Tries New Things, Mark and Ellen's YouTube show.

ecided to remove those first episodes and start again, this time with a more positive show title, Miss Ellen Tries New Things. Copyright clearance forms were dutifully filled out by myself, the videographer and now producer. A week of episodes typically took an hour to film and I produced them in the evenings after I finished work, which continued at home at the kitchen table until late June.

A NEW CONNECTION

COVID-19 has been a challenge, but it has also given many of us the opportunity to hone new skills to reach our audience: producing things with no budget; learning to use the Internet; and, experimenting with equipment and lighting systems. Creativity has also been an important outlet to maintain our mental health. In this new world of COVID-19, we see our creative friends online. The online world isn't the same as in person, "Zoom fatigue" can set in after all day on work video calls, but after hours, the Internet gives each of us a creative outlet and allows us to connect with our friends and fans.

Mark Hunter is an historian, public policy analyst, writer, videographer, and musician living in St. John's, NL. Mark has written three non-fiction books and numerous journal articles.

HOW TO READ TIME FROM THE GRAPH OF A PANDEMIC

*If it is said of this year, the world stopped,
that time became grief
vs gratitude,*

*I'll say I remember
trout-fishing with my father
in Long Pond—*

*another time when time eluded
the usual measures
of the world.*

*I was a kid then,
as kids once were,
and believed a pond eel*

*that fought the hook
would be reborn from a hair
loosed from the swished tail of a horse*

*I'd help lead, after a day's long mowing,
knee-deep into the burning cold
of the North Atlantic.*

*It didn't matter I knew nothing
of metamorphosis— beyond how a pond
becomes a river becomes the sea.*

*Everything made sense then.
The eel question was but a fanciful spiral,
a father's answer leading into a daughter's next question.*

*I was no more than ten
when I helped Dad repair a sill:
jacked-up the back porch of Poppy's house,*

*planed the spruce, held the level, steadied a pail of nails,
remembered each measurement.
It all took—*

*as a pandemic will— decades less
than the time required to grieve, a lifetime
less than the answer.*

EC Daley has been a recipient of the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts and Letters Award, and Memorial University Sparks Literary Festival participant. Her poems have appeared in TAR and Descant, and in two chapbooks of poetry by the Wednesday Ship Poets.

APOCALYPSE LOG:

THE FIRST THREE MONTHS

by Sharon King Campbell

MARCH

The first thing I do is tackle the office. To cushion six weeks' work and tickets to see my parents in BC disintegrating predictably and inevitably as a favourite shirt, I break open the filing cabinets.

The afternoon sun stretches a warm trapezoid across the laminate. We have a long stretch of sunny days that feel like

a token of remorse, a bouquet from whatever force tripped the breaker on our plans. At least we can go outside. At least we're

home together. At least we have what we need, for now.

The office is the bedroom we can't list – its window too small to climb out of in a fire. One wall doubles as my partner's walk-in-closet. His dress shirts hang over the radiators, undisturbed since he stopped working. He's learning to bake pie. He's good at it. The fridge is full of pie-in-progress: bottles of sugared apple, runny blueberries, yesterday's crust in plastic, chilling.

My desk was against the window. I move it to the opposite wall, let the light in. I set up the monitor as another window, where I can still see faces that I love, like an enchanted mirror from a fairy tale. Still, the slope of our old house pulls my wheeled chair determinedly toward the sunlight. I find myself staring at the maple outside, last year's leaves long

dead and still clinging to their branches, and below, a carpet of them poking through the melting snow.

APRIL

He's tapped the maple. As a test, he fills our biggest soup pot with the sap and boils it all day on our kitchen burner. The windows fill up with sweet-smelling steam. At the end, it burns a little, but we

sip its searing sugar and grin to each other. That week he buys a massive outdoor boiler and sits outside, adding liquid to replace the escaping steam. When he comes in to warm up, he smells like the softening spring air,

with maple droplets clinging to his eyebrows, in his beard.

My hobbies are indoors: I fling myself through movie trilogies, steadily knotting wool into slippers. I execute complicated recipes that take all day. I've bought a ukulele and I learn to make delicate chords against its little fretboard. I make myself a sticker chart, and when I can't find stickers anywhere, I draw smiling faces in each box as I complete the task: eat breakfast, talk to someone, go outside. A friend recommends a series of exercise videos and my partner in the basement watches the crossbeams shudder as my not-so-nimble feet land my full weight, gorilla-like, across them. I give myself a smiley for the workout.



Sharon King-Campbell

MAY

I am suddenly inconsolable. It comes from nowhere. I weep in the shower. I take myself for walks after dark so nobody will see that I am crying. My friends deliver stickers to my mailbox – contact free – but I've abandoned the chart. I put my head down into a book of puzzles and pick it up a few days later, smeared with grief and disgust, starving but unwilling to eat. Everything tastes the same now.

I consider a new chart, more manageable goals, but the time for that has passed. I'm out of strategies to keep myself afloat. I make a calendar instead, and put the cheerful, shining stars in each box as they day goes by.

Our backyard maple's branches are tipped with pink buds. Soon, when the sun comes out, they will burst open into green. When they do, the leaves will block the light again.

Sharon King-Campbell is a writer, theatre artist and storyteller based in St. John's. She holds a Master's in Creative Writing from MUN and was a winner in both the 2019 and 2020 Arts & Letters Awards. Her first book of poetry, *This Is How It Is*, will be published by Breakwater Books in 2021.

HALF THE BATTLE

PUBLISHING IN PERILOUS TIMES



by Glen Cadigan

On Dec. 31 I made a joke online that I waited over twenty years to tell. "Looking forward to 2020, the year of the optometrist!" Then 2020 was upon us, and now it will be remembered as the year of COVID-19.

In the beginning, things were looking good. I had multiple projects in the pipeline and it promised to be my most productive year in a long while. In February I had an article published about the 20th anniversary of the death of Charles Schulz. I finally heard back from Riddle Fence, over a year-and-a-half after I'd submitted a story, with the news that it would be published in the next issue. And I was waiting for the arrival *The World of TwoMorrrows*, which contained my essay about my five years as an editor/author for the publisher. There was also an online article and two print ones in the works. I repeat, things were looking good.

WARNING SIGNS

I was skating around The Loop when the announcement came over the radio that the NHL was shutting down. Society followed soon thereafter.

The *TwoMorrrows* book was printed in China and was about to leave the country when COVID-19 hit. It eventually did, only to arrive in America just as distributors and stores closed. The only copies in circulation were ones ordered directly from the publisher; my author's copy took over three months to arrive in the mail.

FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS

The issue of *Riddle Fence* was somehow published during the pandemic, but stores couldn't carry it because they weren't open. The online article fell through the cracks. The first print article was for the 2020 Comic-Con Souvenir Book, but once Comic-Con was cancelled, Comic-Con@Home was announced and it became a downloadable PDF. The other print article, while delayed, is still going ahead.

Like a lot of writing organizations, WANL focuses on the writing side of, well... writing. And that's great, but that's only half the battle. The publishing side follows the writing side, and if something is published and no one sees it, did it really happen?

A TALE OF TWO EXPERIENCES

Like Charles Dickens wrote, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Projects came to completion only to vanish without even a launch. It makes one

wonder, what was all that hard work for, anyway?

But like Sylvester Stallone wrote, "It ain't about how hard you hit, it's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward."

PERPETUAL MOTION

So I didn't stand still. I was accepted into Lisa Moore's Creative Writing class at MUN, then had to navigate getting re-registered as a student while MUN was shut down. Then I saw in the WANL newsletter that Eva Crocker was teaching a class a month before it began, so I took it, too. I had never attended a work-

shop before and had never used Zoom, but for four months I was a student without leaving my house.

I kept busy. I got things done. I sent stories out into the world and got reject-

ed. I was encouraged to send more.

I know there are people waiting to see their name in print for the first time, but it's not over when that happens. There's what comes after, and it can disappoint you or thrill you or leave you the same as you were before. The important thing to remember is to keep moving forward, and if a virus shuts down the world, or if you're published during a pandemic and nobody sees it, keep writing. That's the only thing you can control, so don't stop doing it.

"IT AIN'T ABOUT HOW HARD YOU HIT, IT'S ABOUT HOW HARD YOU CAN GET HIT AND KEEP MOVING FORWARD."

- SYLVESTER STALLONE

Glen Cadigan is an author of both fiction and non-fiction. More about his career can be found on his website: www.glencadigan.com.

WORKING THROUGH A PANDEMIC

TIPS AND TRICKS TO KEEP GOING

by Melissa Wong

When Newfoundland and Labrador first declared lockdown, I created a blog post to track the virus, because I could do that from home. After weeks of researching the horrifying impact of the pandemic, I posted my last major news story for the time being. As work became rare, I grew bored.

The worldwide pandemic still stressed me, but you can only stress about the tragic state of the world so much before you become numb. I used extra free time to take on several writing projects to stay busy. My tips to stay productive during a pandemic:

1. ROUTINE

I planned to sit down every day, at the same time, and write 100 words. It sounded easy in theory, but then my grandmother, Boey Wong, died in April. Because of COVID-19, her funeral was postponed until her children could safely travel to Newfoundland and Labrador. We created an online memorial for her, and many Newfoundlanders posted kind comments that recognized her as a Botwood icon. It's good to have a routine, but life won't always happen according to plan. Catastrophes at home, and on the news, might make it impossible to keep your routine. Try to write every day, but you cannot force productivity.

2. SELF CARE

When the walls are closing in, sometimes you need the freedom to write for yourself. Sometimes a writer needs to write something they cannot publish to work through their grief, and who knows? Maybe once they start writing, they will continue until they are ready to write for a particular purpose.



3. WORKSPACE

Okay, you are finally ready to write again. Where are you going to write? Anywhere. All I need is a pen and paper. What if you like some structure? You can create a home office. When I need to write, I write in my home office, and when I leave, then I am done for the day.

4. TODO

The first thing you should write is the dreaded “to-do” list. You will need some realistic, achievable goals. Set your timer for five minutes. Research writing competitions and publishing companies, then pick the projects of interest. Create a step-by-step plan so you can realistically work on something every day. Stick to your goals.

5. RECRUIT

Tell everyone in your bubble you don’t want to be disturbed when writing. Tell them your plan. If they support you, your work will be easier.

6. FIRST STEP

The first step is the hardest because you are committing to something. Once you’ve invested your time, you want to see it to the end. Write the first sentence and keep going.

7. OVERCOME PRO-CRASTINATION

Stop playing with your music playlist. Mute your phone. Keep your workplace clean, and organized, so you don’t have distractions.

8. CARROT ON A STICK

Reward yourself, afterward. If you plan to eat a cupcake, wait until you finish working. Use it as motivation to keep focused.

9. KEEP REGULAR HOURS

Set a timer for three hours, then go bake bread, or stretch your legs. After your break, work on your blog, or a gig, so you don’t burn out.

10. DON’T GIVE UP!

If you need a break from writing, for a week, or a few days, don’t give up on your project. Go back to it. It’s never too late to finish what you started.

“REMEMBER WHAT COMPELLED YOU TO WRITE AND HOLD ON TO IT.”

BONUSTIP

Use your love of writing to motivate you. Remember what compelled you to write and hold on to it. That passion drives you to create. It can help you endure pain, and find happiness doing what you love. If you have questions about how to be productive, contact me on Twitter @MilsongWong.

Melissa Wong is a librarian, copy editor, freelance journalist, published author, and WANL writer who loves to create stories. Melissa earned a BA (Hons) from Memorial University, and a journalism diploma from College of the North Atlantic. She is the recipient of the 2017 Atlantic Journalism Award.



QUARANTINE FRIENDS

by Ann Galway

My dining room window looks directly down on Neil's Pond in Paradise. A walking trail encircles the pond, making it a constant source of much needed distraction. Having returned from outside the province on June 2nd, I began my fourteen day self-isolation period and got to know a lot about life on and around the pond. I was blessed that June came with beautiful weather this year.

At 6:30am that first morning I sat by the window to see what was happening on "my pond." The sky was clear and blue and the sun sparkled off the water. To my surprise, a young woman was already out for her morning run. She sped past, pony tail swinging, feet pounding the ground, energy abounding.

UP THE POND

I saw a movement up the pond. To my delight, a family of ducks was coming my way. When they got close I counted eight ducklings out for an early morning lesson with mom and dad.

When the babies drifted out of line, Father Duck rounded them up and got the line moving again. When they got to shore they all wobbled up onto the grass.

Suddenly a crow appeared out of nowhere and landed near the group. Mother Duck quickly gathered her little ones together and began to usher them back into the water. Father Duck ran interference. Head held high, chest puffed out, he faced off with the crow. Determined

to protect his family at all costs, he forged ahead toward the black bird. He looked intimidating from my vantage point and I assumed the bird thought so too, because after a few flaps of his wings he flew off in a huff.

I wasn't the only one who befriended the duck family. Another morning I watched an old man walk slowly up the trail, stopping periodically to peer over the edge and into the bushes and reeds. He carried a bag in his hand. As if on cue the duck family came out from their hiding place and hurried toward him. He began to toss bread crumbs on the ground and bent over to get a better look at them. He walked away several times only to turn back for another look. It was a heartwarming scene.

REGULAR VISITORS

Small children from the local daycare, holding onto hoola-hoops for safety and I'd like to think, physical distancing chattered as their young teachers tried to hurry them along. There was an old couple who came every day. He had a cane and walked slowly. She held his arm with care. A trio of silver haired ladies came regularly to sit on the bench, watch the ducks and chat.

All day the walkers, runners and joggers came, hundreds during the two weeks. Some were out for the exercise,

others just for a stroll. Through the open window I listened to the chatter of friends catching up on events of their day. There were many moms with baby strollers. Early evenings saw many families strolling by lazily, giggling and chatting, stopping to admire the baby ducklings. I observed obvious efforts to practice safe distancing.

CONTINUAL MOVEMENT

Half of the people who went by had a dog or two. Some of these pets were excited to be out, others had to be coaxed along. Some owners stopped to play fetch in the water with their furry friends or just to let them cool off. I saw familiar breeds such as beagles, terriers, and Labs. But I was also privy to such unique breeds as Dalmatians, Great Danes and even a Saluki.

There were many, many bikers. There were the strong and focused bikers, the young ones doing wheelies and the dad training his son to ride a two wheeler, shouting encouragement as the boy struggled to ride an imaginary straight line.

Every day brought something new and interesting. All those people will never know how thankful I am for the part they played in helping me through those two weeks in June.

Thank you and stay safe, my friends.

Ann Galway is a retired teacher who loves to write short stories, a number of which have been published in Newfoundland and Labrador books and magazines. She has been teaching in the Northwest Territories with her husband since retiring.





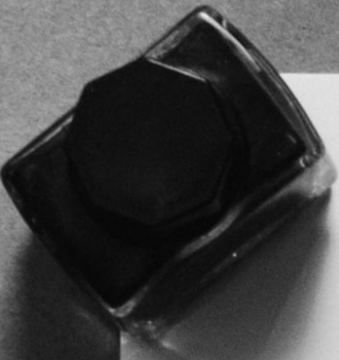
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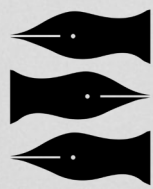
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