Parade Street Reunion

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MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THIS INSTITUTION BEGAN ITS LEGACY in 1925, as a ‘living memorial’ to Newfoundlanders killed in action during the First World War. Our inaugural class totaled 55 students—both men and women seeking a post-secondary education to better their lives and that of the place they called home.

After graduation, many returned to their hometowns to assume important roles as community leaders and volunteers. It was, perhaps, the earliest example of our outreach efforts—to share our knowledge and expertise for the betterment of people and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. This summer, we will be celebrating the 85th anniversary of our inauguration with the first ever reunion of the Parade Street campus.

Our history is one of impact and success, made possible by people who cared deeply about this institution and the province it serves. And we have remained steadfast to our mission born from the sacrifice of young Newfoundlanders nearly a century ago—a mission captured in the words commemorating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment “… that in freedom of learning, their cause and sacrifice would not be forgotten.”

Memorial University, like the province itself, is on the threshold of a bright future with new frontiers to explore, complex problems to solve and extraordinary discoveries to be made. These accomplishments, like those of our past, will be built on an unshakable foundation forged by our history and our unique relationship with the people of this province.

This issue of Luminus magazine celebrates those roots through the words of some of the best writers from Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond.

Enjoy.

CHRISTOPHER LOOMIS
PRESIDENT & VICE-CHANCELLOR PRO TEMPORE

Editorial

BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF HIS WORK, most Memorial students never meet Bert Riggs. But he is an integral part of the Memorial team with a vast knowledge of Newfoundland and Labrador’s history. I met Bert only recently. It wasn’t a social call. Luminus editor Wade Kearley and I went to the library to ask for his help with this issue of Luminus magazine. As the head of the Archives and Special Collections, Bert generously entertained our inquisitiveness, pulling boxes and folders off the shelves containing everything from officers’ kits to uniforms to photographs of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment deployed in Gallipoli. And there, in one of the Books of Newfoundland, was a remarkable photograph of the regiment on the Parade Grounds just before leaving for the front. As you will see in the centerfold pages they are standing on the exact site where Memorial College was later to be built in their honour. That’s where Memorial’s story starts.

This year marks Memorial’s 85th anniversary and it is also the year of the first ever reunion of graduates from the original Memorial campus on Parade Street. In a year so full of significance, we wanted to give you a magazine that will be just as extraordinary. We wanted a magazine that will underscore the close, intrinsic relationship that Memorial and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have—a relationship that was founded on the courage and determination of a generation of Newfoundlanders. Who better to tell those stories than Memorial’s former writers-in-residence? These are some of the best writers in Canada who, over their tenure at Memorial, got to know not just the university, but the people who make up Newfoundland’s communities. From Kevin Major to Lisa Moore, from Jane Urquhart to Andy Jones, in this issue we bring your their words, wisdom and wit.

BOJAN FÜRST
EDITOR

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Thirteen of Canada’s most talented authors and poets have graced the halls of Memorial University since 1991 as writers-in-residence. Each has contributed in her or his own way to the literary depth of our community. But, perhaps equally important, each of these writers has in turn been affected profoundly, sometimes in life-altering ways, by their experience of the people and culture in which Memorial is rooted.

*Luminus* is pleased to present, for the first time, the following chorus of original works by 11 of Memorial’s former writers-in-residence*… a reunion of considerable talent gathered to honour, in their own unique ways, those early graduates of Memorial on Parade Street to whom this issue is dedicated.

*Missing from these pages are Guillermo Verdeccia, writer-in-residence for 1999 and Gregory Schofield, writer-in-residence for 2003.*
The Newfoundlanders replaced the South Wales Borderers, the centre position in the five-mile front. To one side of Brigade were the Anzacs, and to the other the impossible hill of Kiretch Tepe Sirt, then beyond that the Aegean Sea. Ahead of them, in the eastern sky, towered Tekke Tepe ridge, infested with Turks and impossible to penetrate without sacrificing whole regiments. The Anzacs had tried in August, and pulled back desperately depleted. Albert overheard a pair of C Company officers eagerly debating the possibility of the Newfoundlanders mounting an offensive to take the ridge. Apparently, Commanding Officer Burton had proposed that very thing to General Hamilton, head of the forces on Gallipoli.

‘Single-handedly’ was the notion Burton had advanced, according to what the officers recounted, hardly able to contain their disbelief. The general denied the request. And choked back a laugh, Albert suspected, given that Hamilton knew first hand the hell the Anzacs had suffered.

Albert had been on the peninsula less than a week when he himself encountered Hamilton. The general showed up near the front lines from time to time, entourage in tow, making his way through the safer sections of the support trenches. Albert could see straightaway that the man was no ordinary brass, but it was only after a scramble of words from the duty officer that he realized exactly who was coming his way. Albert, bare-chested, in short khaki pants, stiffened to

On the 30th of September
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attention, his other hand gripping upright the shovel he’d been using. Hamilton strode tall and lean, his moustache the most robust feature of an angular, worn face. When he spoke he was mild-mannered and forthcoming in a grandfatherly fashion, not in the least what Albert had expected.

‘From New-found-land are you, Private?’

‘No, sir, not exactly. From Labrador, sir.’

‘I’ve heard of Labrador. Gallipoli is a bit of an oven for you then?’

‘We have our hot days at home, sir, but nothing like this.’

Hamilton looked him over, impressed, it appeared, by the solidness of his build.

‘You take to the sun.’

Albert was well-tanned, his skin conducive to the sun, unlike that of most in the Regiment.

‘He reminds me of the Australian lads,’ Hamilton said to his lieutenant. ‘In physique, if not in height.’

‘Yes, sir,’ came the dutiful, uncomfortable reply.

‘Labrador,’ he said to Albert. ‘I seem to recall something about a doctor, a missionary of sorts. He has written several accounts of his time there.’

‘That would be Doctor Grenfell.’

‘Yes, that’s the man. As fine a Christian as the Empire has produced.’

Albert couldn’t help but smile, and eagerly claim Grenfell to be his good friend and employer.

‘He’s hoping to serve, sir. In the field hospitals in France.’

‘I’m not surprised. When you return home please extend my best wishes to the doctor.’

‘Yes, sir.’

Hamilton moved on, spending more time with the men, although nothing as long as he had spent with Albert.

Hamilton was known to have a deep-seated admiration for the Australians. From what Albert knew of the Aussies it was hardly returned. They had suffered horribly under the command of the Englishman, and while many would attribute the numbers of their dead to the terrain and to the fierceness of the Turks, Albert had heard more than a few barbs about the orders emanating from Command Headquarters set up on the offshore island of Imbros.

Yet Albert couldn’t help but be persuaded by the General’s eagerness to set himself among the ordinary soldier. In training he had only once set eyes on a general, perched on a horse across a vast stretch of troops on parade. His encounter with Hamilton turned his head, set it to mulling over what it took to be in charge of a whole battleground, the navy at your back, men from a batch of countries filling your trenches, none knowing the fate about to be unleashed.

It was a passing curiosity, and so far from the duties that stared him in the face—widening the rut of a trench—that it was soon out of his mind again. The Regiment had been long in the trenches without any sign of the Turks being whipped up enough to attack. Routine had settled in. The first hour after dawn was spent on the fire step, rifles at the ready, bayonets locked, sights fixed to the enemy trenches. It set the day in order. The Turks did the same, and rarely had anything come of it except to affirm there was a war on.

All that was about to change, and rather abruptly.

Born in Stephenville, Kevin Major graduated from Memorial University and then taught school for a number of years, before turning to writing. He is the author of 16 books, for both young people and adults, many of them award-winning. This summer two of his plays, No Man’s Land and Lead Me Home will be on stage in Trinity. An adult novel, New Under the Sun, is due for release in August.
I remember my first glimpse of St. John’s, how impressed I was by the magnificent Basilica at the summit of the city, and by the stone statue of St. Patrick blessing the city from the top of the Benevolent Irish Society. I recall as well the glint of the harbour at the bottom of steep hills, and a smear of multi-coloured frame houses. All this was viewed through the lens of a Gulliver’s cab side window, and what was going on inside the cab was just as colourful. “He was a hard case,” the driver was telling me, referring to his grandfather who, at the age of ninety-four, had been arrested for assault after a bar brawl. “I misses him dearly.”

I was beside myself with excitement, having accepted an invitation to spend the fall term of 1992 as writer-in-residence at Memorial University, the first mainlander, I believe, to be offered such an honour. I was looking forward to finishing the last draft of my eccentric, Irish-themed novel Away while sedately occupying my office in the English Department. What I had not counted on was that I would be walking right into a world even more eccentric, imaginative and vital than the one that I had been attempting to create on the page, and that what I created on the page would be enhanced by my encounters with the vibrant writing community that was already flourishing in Newfoundland.

Take for example my small circle of students, hand-picked for me by the marvellous poet and professor Mary Dalton. Among them were such astonishing young writers as Lisa Moore, Carmelita McGraw, Libby Creelman and Michael Winter. I will never forget my first encounter with their work. I had been a university writer-in-residence before this time, and I had taught at various summer schools for the creative arts, but I had simply never encountered such energetic, muscular prose, not during those stints, and not even in the world of published Canadian letters.
Any thoughts I might have had concerning my role as a conventional teacher vanished once I had taken a look at the work these young Newfoundlanders were doing, so we held informal workshops instead in my rented house, Lisa and Michael often providing a twelve-pack of what I could never stop myself from calling Black Horses.

Other influences were at work as well: professor Larry Mathews had already discovered many of my students and had been instrumental in creating what was known as “The Burning Rock Collective.” Bernice Morgan and Helen Porter, firmly rooted in the place that had given birth to them, were creating fictions that would open up that place to the rest of the world. Joan Clark and her husband Jack had recently moved to St. John’s, and Joan was working on her magnificent Newfoundland saga Eiriksdottir. Shane O’Dea, English professor and orator extraordinaire, was acting-head of the English Department. And Anne Hart, director of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, was beginning her research concerning Mina Hubbard, research that would result in The Woman Who Mapped Labrador. I was fortunate enough to come to know them all.

I had temporarily abandoned my family in order to seize what I saw as my Newfoundland adventure. At Thanksgiving, therefore, my husband, artist Tony Urquhart, and our daughter Emily—then fourteen—came to visit for a week. Emily never forgot the experience; Shane and Maire O’Dea’s splendid historic house on Kenna’s Hill, the trip out to Salmonier to visit her father’s long-term friends Chris and Mary Pratt, the fact that she was almost blown off Cape Spear when her mother-the-mainlander drove her out there to see the waves, and listening to Irish poet Michael Longley read his poems above the old Duckworth Café. Things of this nature simply did not occur in either rural or urban Ontario.

So it was no surprise to me when after a few years working in the field of journalism Emily announced she wanted to do a graduate degree in Folklore at Memorial. After all, she couldn’t have helped but notice that I myself had taken every available opportunity to return to the place that had welcomed me so warmly in 1992, and I couldn’t help but tell her how important Memorial University Library’s Folklore collection had been to me while I was working on the last draft of Away. She is just about to enter the third year of her PhD with the distinguished Professor Gerry Pocius as her thesis adviser. And now it is I who visits her in St. John’s—always making sure to see old friends as well when I am there—and it is she who drives me out to Cape Spear.

An Officer of the Order of Canada, Jane Urquhart is the author of five internationally acclaimed novels. She is also the author of a collection of short fiction and four books of poetry. Her work has been translated into numerous foreign languages and she is a Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France. Among her nine honorary doctorates from Canadian universities is one from Memorial University of Newfoundland where she also served as writer-in-residence in 1992. Her new novel, Sanctuary Line, will be published by McClelland & Stewart in September 2010.
I was a writer-in-residence at Hollins University in 2002. Hollins, located in Roanoke, Virginia, is an all-women’s university. The university requires all undergraduates to live on campus in dormitories that, during the Civil War, were hospitals for the wounded of the Confederacy. South of the Mason-Dixon Line, the Civil War is referred to as “the war between the states.” To refer to it as anything else is perilous for an outsider.

Hollins is an oasis of liberal Democrats in a desert of conservative Republicans. Kerry/Edwards signs were planted on lawns all over the campus. Outside the brick walls, Bush/Cheney signs were everywhere—as were motorists who demonstrated their belief that real men don’t wear shorts by throwing things from fast-moving cars at male joggers who ventured off campus, and pulling the trigger of pantomimed pistols and shouting “faggot.”

Roanoke used to be a railway town, a passenger depot for Amtrak, but there is no longer passenger service from Roanoke to anywhere. The way the people who live there tell it, Roanoke did what an American city customarily does when Amtrak ceases to be its major employer: It began to produce night-vision goggles for the U.S. Armed Forces.

I went to a local supermarket late one night and bought a can of mixed nuts. The checkout clerk, the only employee in the store, looked at me wide-eyed and said: “When you get these home, don’t turn your back on them.”

“Why?” I said.

“Because they’re NUTS,” he said.

There being little else to do, I became a fan of the Hollins lacrosse team. No one “tried out” for lacrosse. Anyone who volunteered to play was awarded two credits.

Seated in the bleachers at my first game, I watched the arrival by bus of the Sweet Briar team. Twelve women, whose average height I guessed was six-foot-three, disembarked with lacrosse sticks in their hands. All of them were blonde, all sported golden tans. “Here come the Amazon women,” said one of my three fellow Hollins fans, an old man wearing a cap emblazoned with a Confederate flag and wielding a cane that he thumped on the bleachers when the women from Hollins took the field.

“Dear Lord,” he said, “this year’s crop looks worse than ever.” The Hollins women were short, skinny, pale, studious looking. All wore glasses. They limped and hobbled and seemed to be leaning on their lacrosse sticks to keep from falling. Most of them bore bandages on their elbows, on their knees. One woman wore a neck brace that forced her to look almost straight up into the air. “If they was horses,” the old man said, “they would’ve shot ‘em long ago.” He led us in a cheer of “Go, Hollins, go,” that lasted for about three minutes, by which time Sweet Briar was celebrating its seventh goal and their goalie was doing pull-ups on the posts.

I took to administering a Canada quiz in an attempt to find out how much the students and professors knew. “I don’t think they call it Canada,” one student said. “I think the right name is Canadia. That’s where the word Canadian comes from.” The head of one of the liberal-arts departments, when
asked to name three of Canada’s ten provinces, replied “The only one I know for certain is Vancouver.”

There was a snowstorm on Labour Day—the third of the 311 days that would comprise my stint as writer-in-residence at the Regina Public Library—which I hoped in vain the natives of Regina would assure me was anomalous or would seem even slightly disconcerted by.

By winter, the nights were so cold that not even by plugging your car into a block heater could you ensure that it would start in the morning. You had to keep your car running all night long by placing a brick on the gas pedal.

Throughout my ten-month tenure, I dealt with two people who asked me to help them with their writing.

There was a middle-aged woman who brought me what she described as “a children’s novel, for preschoolers I think, whose main character is a little lamb named Flossie.” It appeared to me, as I regarded the typescript, that it was about 150 pages long. I told her to leave it with me and to come back and see me in a week.

I began reading the book, which was called “The Barnyard Adventures of Flossie McPhee.” The first fifty pages were of the sort that the title led me to expect. Flossie began to grow up and made friends with other lambs. She drank milk from a bottle held by a succession of children.

I turned to page fifty-one, the first line of which read: “Flossie pecked at the ground with her beak.”

At last, I thought, postmodernism has found the audience that it deserves.

I turned back to page fifty and then to page one to confirm that Flossie had begun the book as a lamb. I then returned to page fifty-one and continued reading.

“She still hadn’t learned the knack of picking up those little seeds.”

The woman came back to see me at my office and said, “Well, what do you think?” Solicitously, congenially, by prefacing my comments with the caveat that I had never evaluated a children’s book before, that she was doubtless better versed in certain aspects of the genre than I would ever be, I commended the woman on her writing but eventually got round to the narrative twist by which I was so nonplussed.

“What did you have in mind?” I said, “when, between the bottom of page fifty and the top of page fifty-one, you transformed Flossie from a lamb into a chicken?”

The woman looked mystified, embarrassed. She reached across the desk and took the book from me. She looked at the bottom of page fifty and the top of fifty-one and put her hand over her mouth. I assured her the transformation of Flossie from a lamb into a chicken was a mistake of the sort that would have made it into published novels if not for editors.

I do have some fond memories of Regina:

The clattering of leaves along the street outside my window on gusty autumn afternoons.

The zodiacal light that because of the flatness of the prairie I could see on the horizon for hours after sunset.

The street people, mostly men, who on winter mornings came into the library to escape the cold and slept undisturbed in the chairs outside my door like the congregants of some exclusive club who had nodded off while chatting over brandy and cigars.

The bi-monthly visits of my wife.

From the sound-proofed bunker in the basement of his Toronto home, where he retreats to write at night, sometimes all night, international bestselling author Wayne Johnston has issued some of the most memorable fiction and non-fiction of his generation. Among his major successes is The Colony of Unrequited Dreams which the Globe and Mail newspaper listed as one of the 100 most important Canadian books ever written—including both fiction and non-fiction. “Two Vignettes ...” previously appeared, in greatly altered form, in the Walrus magazine.
Everyone has a place where their mind comes into being

By Marilyn Bowering

It was a long walk from the tip of Coley’s point, across a beach of smooth stones and almost as far as Mercer’s Cove where she had an aunt, to get to the Methodist school. One day, when the snow began to fall, Miss Butt, the teacher, said to her and her sister, “You girls come home with me, and my brother will give you a ride home in the sleigh.” They walked with the teacher a little ways, and then there was their father coming in his sleigh to meet them. They had a horse named Doll. In summer, Doll was put out to pasture and she’d returned that year, coming down the long lane to their house, with a little foal. They called the foal, Forest, because it was born in the forest, and they used to play with it a lot and have fun with it, and jump over the fence when it came after them … (Great Aunt Ellen)

We live on Forest Road, across from the hospital, with a view from our door down the slope to Quidi Vidi. On nice days, I walk my daughter to Bishop Feild and Mrs. Gill’s classroom, and then up the hill and through the streets all the way to MUN. Most days, though, when I go outside, it’s a struggle to get out of the door and up the stairs against the snow and wind. My neighbour, Richard Hanson, scrapes ice from the windshield of his car. His son, Christian, goes to school with my daughter, Xan, and Richard teaches at the University. Richard and I wear fake-fur hats (his have ear-flaps) and heavy jackets and are festooned with briefcases, computers, gloves. The children leap into the backseat of Richard’s car, finish eating toast and start gently bickering.

In late afternoons, I look out my office window: at first, with my west coast eyes, I’m searching for trees: where are they? What kind of landscape is this? Where’s the green? Over the weeks of the semester, I begin to find trees: little ones, bare-boned, and on some days gloriously pricked out in ice. I observe the colour of the sky and calculate whether it’s a good idea to walk back to the school or if I should take a taxi to pick up my daughter from after school care. Once I’m there, my upstairs neighbour whose daughter, Sarah, has become Xan’s best friend, often gives us a ride: in fact, our little nest has come with a built-in network of friends: Joan Clark and Ann Hart who found the house for us; the upstairs neighbour and his children and their mother down the hill; Richard and Janet next door, the Schrank’s, also at the University, a few doors up. The network expands into a web of writers, musicians, artists, academics. Highs and lows: Anne Budgell takes us to Deadman’s Pond to skate and we find a sofa encased in ice; I meet Sister Ann Ameen; I fail Noreen Golfman’s aerobics class. In the evenings I work, give readings or visit writer’s groups, read manuscripts; and then there’s the contests—for the CBC and various awards and prizes: at the Valentine erotic poetry reading, Lillian Bouzane spies me licking chocolate cake from my fingers: “Oh, can you still eat that?” she says ….

My daughter and I walk to Belbin’s for most of our groceries.

She ate pease pudding tied up in a bag and boiled with meat and vegetables; bruise (hard tack boiled up with salt pork, cod fish and onion); bakeapples from Labrador; blueberries. She’d go off and pick the blueberries while her mother worked in the big vegetable garden that her oldest brother, James had on his property. He’d built a small shack on this property—which was as big as a city block—to live in while he was building his house. He was going to get married. She was just eight years old when he died. Her father wrote a poem: none of them went past grade four, but they read a great deal and he worked all his figures for carpentering and boat-building.

“A visit from the hand of death/Has caused us all to mourn,/For one we loved and prized so dear/has from our hearts been torn …”

Tuesday Nights

‘Every Tuesday night, during the worst winter in forty years in Newfoundland—at least, so they told me—a group of fourteen student poets and I- Memorial’s writer-in-residence for the winter semester—met to
workshop poetry at the University. This is how I begin my introduction to the anthology, *Once on a Tuesday Night*, the students produce at the end of the semester. Several of them, including James Langer and Danielle Deveraux, have gone on to publish. But what strikes me about the poems now, is that each has something to say and I still want to listen. I’d heard, before classes began that the poet, Mary Dalton, laid on atmosphere for her poetry class: lamps from home draped in scarves, home-made cookies, music. Once they’d taken the measure of me, the class brought in giant boxes of donuts and pizza .... I loved their humour and the passion they brought to poetry. On Tuesday nights I took a taxi both directions: when I came home and paid Gillian, the babysitter, I’d find my daughter asleep in my bed.

Collage (from the students’ poems):

I am a poem
My form
Lies within
The boundaries of your thoughts
I can break a heart ...
I can pray
I take the stones of these words
I travel deep into the skull
Until I can find a crack
Shapes float upward
Stirring the mirror face of quiet
Sometimes late a night
I like to dim
All but one tiny lamp
And watch you
Strip me bare
I stand alone in the snow
Smell the hair and the skin
Feel the voices on my neck, near my ear
The night sky lit
Landscapes, ice water clear
Let them hear the waves
That I’ve made your home.

Love is what happens
When the little arcs
That used to snap and fizz
Begin to hurt

Sometime in 1980, after I came back from living in Scotland, I painted a hill. It’s a simple image of wind-blown golden grass and above it a dark and turbulent sky. If you look closely you’ll see sea-birds flying. My husband, a Scot, thinks he knows where it is; but I knew when I painted it, it was an image I’d had in my mind as long as I can remember.

My father was born at the end of Gully’s Road on Coley’s Point where the post office is. His mother grew up in Mercer’s Cove. I lived with my grandparents in Victoria when I was small and from both grandparents, but particularly my grandmother, heard poetry. My grandfather also told stories, but my grandmother evoked places—none more so than French’s Cove, where her family had first settled, and I’d sit on her lap and think I could see it.

The hills are turfy like many I’ve seen in Scotland, and with long flat sweeps above the ocean. The wind howls in our faces as we walk down the track, with Chum, the dog, leading to the end where there are graves from the 1700s. The site was too exposed, and so the original outport inhabitants moved farther in: you can still see an old cellar, with birch bark between the stones for waterproofing, where they built. Little black birds flip and fly; we notice two dogs and a young man carrying a ghetto blaster pass along the horizon. I and my parents, who have come to visit, climb up behind where once laneways ran bordered with two-storey houses, and stand and look down to where far below there is wrack and rock, and we can only imagine the gardens and stages: but the wind is cold and my parents are elderly, and so we tuck in low behind a ridge where the grass is golden, long and tufty; and then my parents look at each other and smiling take hands, and they lie down on the earth. I lie beside them, and right in front of us there’s the hill, the one I absorbed through my skin.

Marilyn Bowering is a poet and novelist who lives in Sooke, B.C. Her most recent published work is *What It Takes To Be Human* (novel) and *Green* (poetry.) In 2008 she was the Fulbright scholar at NYU (New York). She is at work on a new novel, and on a libretto for the composer Gavin Bryars.
So, are you still writing?

By Kenneth J. Harvey

I am asked the same question any number of times, from anyone I might bump into in the street, in the supermarket, or, most recently, from an elderly woman at my front door searching for her lost cat. We run the course of usual chit chat, and then, towards the end of the conversation as we dangle there, wondering whether "goodbye" might be the next bold step, the question is presented: “So, are you still writing?”

Years ago, when I was first asked this question, blankness would fill my head. The inquiry troubled me to no end. “Yes,” was the obvious answer, of course, but what did the question mean, I wondered? It seemed to imply that what I was doing was somehow transitory, and, if things worked out for me, I might someday find myself in better standing.

So, are you still on welfare?

So, have you had that horrible goitre on the side of your face looked after yet?

So, are you still planning that trip to the moon in your homemade rocket ship?

Of course, peoples’ perception of me as being employed in the realm of some sort of vapourous netherworld not only prevailed outside the walls of my house but within, as well.

Locked away in my “office” in my home, struggling to piece together strings of abstract foolishness, I would find my concentration shattered by perpetual knocks on my “office” door.


Children: “Daddy, come look at this.”

Wife: “There’s someone on the phone who wants to speak at length with you about the purchase of something stupendously frivolous.”

Children: “I drew something for you. I’ll slip it under the door.”

Of course, why wouldn’t being a key-tapping ditherer in a room so close at hand give the impression that one was readily available? Why wouldn’t my wife assume that I could appear from my work-nap to deal with the more pressing matter of hanging new blinds in the bathroom? Because what I did was tenuous at best, wasn’t it? No real pressure on me to devote myself to my trade, unless, of course, the money from my juvenile magic act began to dry up.

“I’ll be out in a sec,” was my usual reply, while I scrambled to finish an email message to my agent, dealing with points that might put us in a better position in negotiations with various publishers, or while I wracked my brain to polish an essay for a deadline, or answer the same questions that I have been asked for the past twenty years in any number of interviews.

I have always resisted chastising my children for knocking on my door (although I have done my fair share of it, and no one ever seemed to listen) because one of the perks of being partially-employed and living behind shut blinds with my head in the clouds, was being blessed by the ability to be consistently in the company of my children.

A friend of mine, an artist from Nova Scotia, once told me a story about a friend of his, who practiced (of all things) brain surgery. The brain surgeon took a
fancy to the painter’s preoccupation, and would drop over every now and then for a chat and to watch my friend dabble in his trade.

One day, the brain surgeon said: “You know, I think I’m going to take up painting when I retire,” to which my friend, the painter, replied: “You know, when I retire, I think I’m going to take up brain surgery.”

For most of his life, my father tried to persuade me to take up a proper trade. A few years ago, I expressed a keen interest in the workings of electricity. He suggested I sign up at trades school, and study to become an electrician.

“It won’t take long,” he said. “You’re still a young man, and there’s good money in it.”

At that point, I had already had a bestselling novel, and was published in over a dozen countries.

There has been no dearth of advice or offers of help to get my foot in the door of a more fitting occupation. Over the years, my wife’s friends, upon hearing of some half-baked scheme, would call her up to announce the news:

“That sounds like a good idea,” one of them would say in a tone fraught with concern. “Ken and so-and-so should do that. Something for them to go at in the winter.”

So, you can imagine everyone’s delight when I was offered a real job working as writer-in-residence at a real (and prestigious) institution such as Memorial University. Forget the fact that most people had no idea exactly what it was I would be doing there. They understood one thing: A regular paycheque was being slipped into my bank account by a tangible organization of splendid repute.

“So, you’re teaching at the university?”

“Yes,” I’d say.

“Good for you.” A smile that said: Finally, he’s come to his senses!

Even though my position as writer-in-residence expired back in 2002, I still occasionally get the question: “So, are you still with the university?”

“No,” I have to reluctantly admit, “Sorry.”

“Oh,” comes the reply. “Hmm.” A moment of uneasy silence followed by, “So, are you still writing books?”

“Yes,” I must confess, casting my eyes at the ground in humble supplication, before offering the words that I hope might make a difference: “If I wasn’t writing books, I’d be out of a job.”

“I guess so.” A near hit, as the mention of the word “job” almost charms them toward epiphany.

So, thank you Memorial, for hiring me, and for bestowing a smidgen of legitimacy on my trade. I enjoyed occupying a real office, in a real building, where I worked with real people. To further authenticate my existence, I even had my name posted on an office door in a long, hallowed corridor featuring other doors, behind which the toiling never ceased.

And whenever I experience a self-negating waver, I wander back to that building on that campus, to stand before the office I once occupied, to find ... my name removed from the door, and another in its place.

This diminishment gives me pause, for mightn’t those who viewed me as notorious for confusing the genuine with the fantastic essentially be in the right?

In fact, looking back on my position at Memorial, I cannot help but wonder if I actually made the whole thing up.

International bestselling author Kenneth J. Harvey’s books are published in over a dozen countries. He has won the Rogers Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize, the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award, the Winterset Award, Italy’s Libro Del Mare, and has been nominated twice for the International IMPAC Literary Award, the Giller Prize and the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize. Harvey sits on the board of directors of the Ottawa International Writers Festival.
Moments after my conception

“The importance of antenatal puericulture was fully recognized in China a thousand years ago.”

My mother lay on a rattan mat, legs straight as chopsticks. She did not march out of the city carrying a sword and shield. She was too busy reciting poems that brought tears to her eyes. For nine months she spat hairpins inlaid with kingfisher feathers at the demons snarling at the outer gate. Wore jute sandals. Pinched her nostrils when passing fresh ox dung on the road. On market days, she’d cross the bridge back and forth, gold bells tied to her ankles. Or, sitting upright in a bamboo chair, she’d consort with celestial creatures. She was magnificent as a sacrificial rooster, unblinking as the toad at the bottom of the well. Mornings, she’d beat a pigskin drum to chase away the rabid dogs.

Afternoons, she’d embroider images of kylin on the sleeves of my little jackets. She would not gossip or wade into dreams rotting with fish heads.

If her rice was not sculpted into perfect squares, she would not eat. If her teacup did not glow like the moon, she would not drink. Her gaze swooped like a swallowtail. Her toes spread like the roots of the sui wood tree. From every branch and hook she hung ladies painted with half-human, half-bird grotesques. On the eighth day of the first lunar month, my mother, born in the remote mountains of Sichuan province, turned her back on the evil spirit disguised as a blind beggar. She filled her mouth with pebbles and sang my talents and virtues through the coldest night of winter.

Her auspicious thoughts conjured two white tigers. Under her pillow: a knife engraved with Longevity. A bunch of foxtail millet sprang from each breast.

Initiation

“Among the Yuman Indians of California, as described by Horatio Rust . . . the girls are at puberty prepared for marriage by a ceremony.”

Time to lie down in pits dug out of the earth, strange death-time at the end of childhood, dry tobacco leaves tickling our faces. Three days and three nights we peer through wool blankets. The old ones dancing around us, their wattled arms and veined thighs. How our skin itches, how we gaze at the stars. Time to listen to gourd songs and songs of coyotes. Formless, entombed in the ground, swaddled in warm stones. Time of gifts and straw mats, the women scattering piton nuts, moonlight illuminating the up-thrust stones. Gigling time, the little girls stomping around us, shaking deer-hoof rattles. We wriggle like earthworms, grow bored as squash. Dream-time in open graves, river-dreams and dreams of tortoise lovers. Deep pause below the
horizon, and then blood rush, time to rise up, shake off corpse-dirt. Time to return to our bodies, think of boys as men.

Fruiting bodies

“The breath of Christian asceticism had passed over love; it was no longer, as in classic days, an art to be cultivated, but only a malady to be cured.”

Dear Lord, let me not love the pungent mornings she tromps through wet salal, hunting honeycomb morels at the base of tree trunks, and if she arrives on my doorstep with a kilo of puffballs, let me not love her pail of fruiting bodies, or fall on my knees for the hens of the woods that only moments earlier knuckled out of composted oak stumps. Rather, let me hover on the smoky brink of my life, gazing at heaven, and think not of the slippery jacks or toothy-gilled hedgehogs she empties into my lap.

If during a late summer thunderstorm she roams the dewy meadow, lifting this or that blanket to uncover the cauliflower fungi, I will not look upon her face or crouch down in shaggy moonlight where she gathers pine buttons or breathe the musky air or drink the stream water that carried her like a lone spore to this island. O Lord, let me unlove the wavy-capped one whom I love with a fecund and overlapping joy. For even a glimpse of her, muddy-kneed and bearing a sack of peppery chanterelles, I would crawl through humus and dung the length of three-score and ten worlds. Pity me, for I am sick as an old conk, darker than a truffle buried in damp earth. For love of the mushroom picker I lie on the forest floor and break down break down break down into a pestilence of sweet rot.

Sacred

“Thus an old Maori [asked], Who nowadays thinks of the sacredness of the head? See when the kettle boils, the young man jumps up, whips the cap off his head, and uses it for a kettle-holder.”

The old Maori leaned against the wall of a barbershop on a side street lined with eucalyptus trees. Afternoon rain. Great white birds wheeling off the coast. He’d come for a wet shave, because the barber was good with a hot cloth and strop razor. Never a nick or burn. The sacredness of the head, the old Maori said, the hands, the feet, the buttocks. What will become of us? The boy in the barber’s chair glanced up from his comic book. He looked in the mirror and did not smile. The men on the opposite bench smoked and told jokes and paid no attention to the old Maori, and the sound of snipping scissors sounded nothing like an albatross weeping. The barber swept the cape from the boy’s body, then shook his own apron, quick storm of human hair, and no one but the old Maori understood that another sacred act had occurred at that time, in that place, only he remembered the lamps burning low, the women plunging naked, three times into the spring pool in the eucalyptus grove, the men anointing the women with kisses on their heads, hands, feet, buttocks.

Patricia Young won Arc’s Poem of the Year Contest in 2009 and 2010, and her work was short-listed for the CBC Literary Competition in 2009 and 2010. Her tenth collection of poems, An Autoerotic History of Swings, will be published in the fall of 2010 with Sono Nis Press.

Note: The quotations at the beginning of these poems are drawn from Havelock Ellis’ seven volume encyclopaedia, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, published between 1897 and 1928.
This photograph, taken early in the summer of 1916—shortly after the Newfoundland Regiment was decimated at Beaumont Hamel on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme—shows A and B Companies of the Regiment's 3rd Battalion undergoing inspection before they left for England on July 19. The soldiers are standing on St. John's Parade Grounds, the very site on which Memorial University College was later built as a living memorial to them and all the other Newfoundlanders who had participated in the First World War. In the background is Mount St. Francis Monastery.
In coming issues of *Luminus*, Bert Riggs, BA(Hons.); B.Ed. ’78, Head of Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, will introduce you to individual members of the Regiment who, after returning from the war, developed a connection with Memorial University College or Memorial University as students, faculty, staff or benefactors—one more way in which Memorial is celebrating its long affiliation with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.
Murphy had been locked up for six months and he had escaped. His first night out he’d stayed in a room over a strip club owned by a biker named Harold whom he’d met in the pen.

You can pick up the key to the room at the bar, Harold said. My grandmother lives in the bungalow up over the road. Stop in for a visit. She’s there by herself.

There were scraps of mist all over the highway when the transport truck pulled up next to the strip club. Murphy jumped down to the gravel shoulder from the cab and he could see Harold’s grandmother out on her back porch hanging up the laundry. The line screeched each time she reeled it away from her.

The room had a fire escape that went down the back of the building and there was a little Habachi out there and a dried up geranium in a cracked terra cotta pot.

There was a kitchen at the end of the hall and Murphy found some hotdog wienerers in the fridge. A liquid dripped out of the foil package onto his hand and he smelled the hotdogs and licked his fingers. There were some packets of ketchup and mustard and relish in the bowl.

Murphy took the hotdog wienerers and the bowl of condiments out onto the fire escape. He found the coals and he pulled the string that held the paper bag closed and the string unbraided itself from the paper and Murphy tipped out the lumps of coal.

He squirted starter fluid onto the coals and let it soak in. Then he dropped a match and the fire leapt up in tatters and lay flat and filmed over the coals in blue and green. The flames seemed to be running as fast as they could.

He sat in front of the television with the sound turned down and woke up hours later to a hard knocking on the door. He walked over to the door very quietly and touched his fingertips to it. He heard a foot scuff on the tile. Then he opened the door.

You got a barbeque going, the girl asked.

I’m Annette and she’s Celeste, the other girl said.

We’re the exotic dancers from downstairs, Celeste said. She lifted the wine bottle she had in her hand in a kind of salute.

The three of them sat out on the fire escape and Murphy put the wienerers on the barbeque turning them with a plastic fork. They smoked a fat joint and drank the wine straight from the bottle. They said what they wanted. Celeste wanted to be a dental hygienist and Annette wanted to do her upgrading and Murphy said he wanted to be free.

He gave them each a fork and he passed out the ketchup and they ate the wienerers off the forks, looking up at the stars. Then Murphy looked at his watch and he said it was his birthday.

The next morning Murphy walked over the field to Harold’s grandmother’s house and knocked on the door. It took her a long time to answer.
Twice nominated for the Giller Prize, Lisa Moore has written two collections of stories, Degrees of Nakedness and Open, and two novels: Alligator and most recently February which was nominated for the regional Commonwealth Writers’ Prize. Admired for her ability to focus an unflinching gaze on gritty and unforgettable characters, Moore has also written for national television, radio, magazines and newspapers. She studied for a time at Memorial University, where she became a member of The Burning Rock Collective, a group of influential St. John’s writers.

Harold asked me to drop by, Murphy said. The old woman looked at his face. She had very blue eyes and her hair was white and she wore a bright lipstick.

I guess you could use a good meal, she said. She let him come in and she bent slowly, one hand on her thigh, to open the drawer in the bottom of the stove and she took out a cast iron frying pan.

Can I give you a hand, Murphy asked. But she didn’t answer. She went to the fridge and came back with a package of bacon and two eggs. She put the bacon in the pan and sliced some of the homemade bread that was sitting on a cutting board with a checked dishcloth over the top of it. She cracked the eggs and let them drop into the spitting bacon fat.

Murphy thanked her and he said how much a home cooked meal meant to him, but she didn’t answer. She turned with the frying pan in her hand and saw that Murphy had been speaking.

I am profoundly deaf, she said. She tilted her head and smiled at him, the spatula held in the air.

Does no good to shout, she said. But I can see what you’re saying if I look at your lips. Her voice sounded as though it came from a cave, or as if she’d had a stroke. It was the voice of someone who can’t hear herself speaking, Murphy realized.

It was a little too loud and quavering and every consonant was clearly annunciated. There might have been a bit of a British accent. It sounded kind of upper crust. But he couldn’t be sure. Maybe it was the accent of someone who had learned to speak without hearing; someone who had read about the way a tongue curled up to make certain sounds, and then put it into practice. Murphy thought there was a kind of abandon in the way the woman spoke, and a trust. She trusted that her voice sounded right.

Thank you, he said. He moved his lips, forming the words, but he didn’t speak them out loud.

Pardon, she said. Murphy cleared his throat.

I said thank you, he said. This time he said it out loud. Thank you very much. Thank you for this breakfast and for letting me stay on your property. I just broke out of prison and I don’t want to go back there. Time is like a string in prison, if you took a string and pulled it taut between your two fists. The whole string has the same amount of tension all the way through and there’s no difference between one segment and the next or one minute and the next. The kind of time I was supposed to do is like that. I was supposed to do a very long time. And today is my birthday.

The woman looked away from him then, away from his lips, in order to work the spatula under the two fried eggs so they would slither out of the pan onto his plate. When she looked away Murphy felt as if he had a volume dial and she had turned it down.

She put the frying pan back on the stove. Then she sat down opposite him with her elbows together on the table edge and her fists under her chin. She watched his lips intently but he had nothing else to say.

Are your eggs nice, she asked. Are they done the way you like them?

They’re perfect, Murphy said.

Happy birthday, the woman said. Many happy returns.

Murphy thought about the trucker who had picked him up hitch hiking the day before. The guy had pulled over in the dark onto the shoulder of the highway and Murphy had to run a good length down the road to catch him. He had opened the door and climbed up into the cab. The man put the truck into gear and he waited, his face set toward his side mirror and then a silver convertible flared past them. Somebody in the convertible tossed a beer bottle and it smashed.

The trucker dragged the rig onto the highway. Each wheel hitching itself onto the asphalt with an arthritic lurch and then they gathered speed. A little later, three cop cars passed them with their lights going, but they’d left the sirens off and eventually the three cars disappeared in the silence ahead.
Oceanodroma

By Don McKay
Petrels, little Peters,
so called because, like St. Peter under the auspices of
Jesus, they are said to walk on water. In fact their
pattering and plucking of the surface is more of a
dance, and their flight—erratic, languid, fluttery—is
actually the sea breeze translated into visibility, which
is to say, unadulterated faith. They live almost entirely
at sea, coming ashore only at night, generally
colonizing the cliffs on an island or the unconscious,
where they dig shallow burrows leading to a small
incubating chamber. At sea, and in these burrows,
they are mute, but when they return to the colony at
dusk, they swirl and flit in the manner of stray but
excited thoughts, cooing, purring and making a
chuckling chatter. Genetically, they are related to
Shearwaters; metaphorically, they are related to
moths, ghosts, and lost sisters.

The only time I held a petrel in my hands I was
unstable and susceptible. Having recently moved to
Newfoundland, I had delivered a reading, which was
followed by a gathering at a splendidly raucous pub,
whose vocalizations—now that I come to think of it
—included cooing, purring and a chuckling chatter.
Anything was possible, even a sudden invitation to
help release a Leach’s Storm-Petrel that very night.
Now, in fact, various missing persons slipped from
their closets to crowd the penumbra, which was
teeming with invisible bodies, as though the physics
of loss had been thrown into reverse. I still held a pint
in my hands as we drove out to Middle Cove. Why not?
On my lap a card box contained a Leach’s Storm-
Petrel, a spirit being I had only encountered in bird
guides, where, I had always suspected, a good deal of
speculative fiction was perpetrated under the name of
natural history.

Anything was possible. William, a teenaged pilot
who had perished in the First World War before he
could come back and marry my mother’s Aunt
Frances, and later become my favorite great uncle,
stepped from his frame on her parlor wall, and the
constraints of sainthood, to murmur among the
throng in my busy penumbra. Peter means rock, but
some rocks walk, or dance, on water. Can we believe
this? The cove was dark, free from the city lights that
could confuse the petrel and lure it back to the
buildings where it had first injured itself. The soft
crash of the waves on the cobbles, though soothing,
carried a sinister undertone. That was the North
Atlantic out there, but what was stark oblivion for me
was home and safety for the bird in the box. We
crouched around it, our eyes adjusting. In my hands it
was almost not, almost the anti-bird. A feathered
heartbeat. Unadulterated faith. Which skittered off
into the mothering dark.

(For Holly Hogan and Michael Crummey)
Over the last twenty years or so, the title “writer” has been my passport to some unlikely places. I’ve been invited to read in every province and territory at one time or another. I spent an April afternoon in a pub at Oxford, being taught the nuances of “real” draught beer by a man who was a regular there as a student forty years earlier. I circumnavigated the island of Newfoundland on a Russian research vessel moonlighting as a cruise ship, reading to passengers in the bar. A librarian offered me a brief rundown on the history of the Crummey name before a literary event at the public library in Belfast.

I faced down a class of furious Grade 7s in Hopedale, Labrador, the kids pulled out of gym class and forced to sit for the “poet.” Jesus, they were mad. “I’m not going to listen, sir,” they told their teacher and half of them stuck their fingers in their ears when I started, shouting nonsense to drown me out. I was lucky to escape the room alive.

At a literary festival in Brno, Czech translations of stories about my father’s life in outport Newfoundland were projected on the screen behind me as I read. I gave a talk on the Irish influence on Newfoundland literature at an Irish studies conference in Japan (fell in love with grilled eel while I was there).

All of these adventures seem like ridiculous good fortune and a bit surreal looking back. But nothing in all that time has seemed as strange or unlikely as the invitation to come back to Memorial as writer-in-residence in the spring of 2008.

I had no literary ambitions as a kid. I didn’t encounter my first real live writer until high school.
when Kevin Major came to J.R. Smallwood Collegiate in Wabush, Labrador, to read from his second novel. I was a seventeen-year-old undergrad at MUN before I first started writing myself. Even then I carried out my little habit in secret for years, locking myself in my residence room with an old manual typewriter I’d inherited from Mom. It wasn’t until I entered and won the Gregory J. Power student poetry contest in 1986 that I came out of the closet. Mr. Power was still alive at the time and he was at the awards ceremony to present the check, God bless him. It was one of the first moments I’d ever allowed myself to think I might actually be a writer someday. But even then I never would have guessed I’d be returning to campus twenty-five years later with the title officially inscribed on my office door.

To be honest, I was apprehensive about taking the job. For one thing I was deep into work on my latest novel, Galore, and was feeling greedy about my time. And more to the point, I’ve always been a slacker when it comes to actually thinking about what it is I do when I write. I just sit down and bang my head against the desk until something comes out. Which didn’t seem like particularly useful advice to offer prospective writers coming to my office, with that damn sign on the door.

I was surprised, first of all, by the number of people who did drop-in to talk to me. Students mostly, along with a handful of faculty and writers from the larger community. A couple of former MUN students contacted me from out of town for exchanges by email. They gave me their novels and stories, their poetry, their speculative and science fiction and memoirs, sitting in a chair across from me then, expectantly. And I was surprised to discover I had learned a thing or two about the craft and the business of writing over the last couple of decades that I could pass on in those sessions. There was nothing as formal as the writer-in-residence position when I was a student, but looking back I wish I’d been braver about seeking out the advice of other writers on campus. I might have spared myself a portion of the inevitable loneliness involved in learning a craft as exacting and as fickle as writing. I like to think most everyone who came to see me left the office with one or two notions about the way forward for them.

And as it turns out I needn’t have worried about Galore. The time I spent with aspiring writers made me acutely aware of how lucky I’ve been over the years, of how much I love what I do. And that awareness fed my appetite for my own project.

Near the end of my “tenure,” I served as one of the jurors for the annual Gregory J. Power Poetry Award and I was asked to hand out the checks at the awards ceremony. I made the poor poets wait a few minutes while I talked about what a long strange trip it’s been for me from those first poems in university to wherever it is I am today. Luke Major was the winner that spring and his father, Kevin, was there with a camera. It makes me feel like an old man to say it, but a lot of things seemed to come full circle that afternoon. And for that moment alone, I was grateful to be there.

Michael Crummey has published Hard Light (poetry) and Salvage (poetry), Flesh and Blood (short stories) and three novels, River Thieves and The Wreckage and his latest novel, Galore. It won the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize (Canada/Caribbean Region) and was shortlisted for the Governor-General’s Award. He lives in St. John’s.
WHAT PIERCED US

By Aislinn Hunter

i) The Outport
Towards the cove: nets and buckets,
ghost-white houses hunched
in a bouldery field.
The outport in near-winter tilting
like cream poured from a jug, toward
the frothed lip of the sea.
A landscape of mouths. How even
the smallest stone on the road
announces itself.
The snow-dusted trees, blue needles,
conferring with the chipped cup
of the moon.
And all the old stages arguing
with the thickets, rafts of branches
along the verge.
Fences slanting so much
you can almost feel them lean in
and shoulder the wind.
Dusk caught in the church window:
not a sermon, not a sign, only the sky’s
last light talking to itself.
As if it’s what eeks out of things that says us:
breath in the silence, the names on the crosses,
the salt of the sea.

ii) The Old Houses
Tonight let’s raise the dead
of the unoccupied houses.
Unshutter their eyelids,
pull memory
from the floorboards.
See how the clock of the heart
stops ticking but keeps
its bedside post.
How many nights of love
in such rooms?
How many of fury?
So many that one more
will hardly matter.
So let the cat outdoors,
let the leaves gust
the cracked windows.
The dead will not care
if we rob them
of teapots or gin.
If we unfurl ourselves
in the space
of their making.
They’re still here anyway,
in the wind
battering the walls,
in the clap, clap
of the door.
iii) Another Kind of Departure

Lester’s Field.
What lifts, what flies into.
Alcock and Brown willing themselves
across the Atlantic.

June 1919. Snow in the cockpit.
Sixteen hours fastened in the rift between
the barbed tips of the ocean
and the slit-eyed stars.

Brown climbing onto the wing
to clear ice from the engines—
a man dangling from rafters
above a shoreless sea.

This country in the same
half-flung predicament:
banking north, then south,
then north again.

The men going down nose first
in Derrygimla bog.
The soft lap of earth a comfort
after all that water.

Though they climbed out of the muck
to cuts of turf the size of coffins.
Two men falling from the sky
into history.

A good story to tell down at the pub:
how we once thought we could do
anything. Start out without
looking behind us.

Cut a swathe through the sky,
of a planet we imagined
was a perfect
blue marble.

Something we could drop
from a pocket,
forget about.

Aislinn Hunter is the author of five books including *The Possible Past* (poems), *Stay* (a novel), *Into the Early Hours* (poems) and *What’s Left Us* (novella/stories). Her latest book is *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior* is a collection of paratext essays on thing theory and resonance. She lives in Vancouver but secretly wants to move back to St. John’s.
Me, I’m freaked out by the world.

Can’t stop thinking about the wars, the 142 Canadians, the suicide bombers, their families, their victims, their victims’ families. I’m a pacifist, full of doubt and devoid of hope.

It’s the fall of 2009, I arrive at MUN as writer-in-residence, and I see students from all over the world. A naive, white-bread Newfoundlander, I’m thrilled at seeing hints of other colours, creeds and cultures around me; this is as multicultural as Newfoundland gets. A flicker of hope for harmony and peace among all nations stirs within me. I wish that Albert Hatcher could be here to see it all!

But it’s the ‘swine flu’ semester. I worry that the university will be closed down and this opportunity for world peace will be lost.

Luckily, we stay open and I end up consulting with some remarkable students. I swap folktales with Ashwin Gupta, an East Indian student, who tells me one of his grandmother’s stories of Sheikh Chilli and I share one of Dr. Halpert’s from Folktales Of Newfoundland. A distance education student from Australia emails me a short story. Sylina Jones, from MUN Drama, invites me to judge a playwriting contest. In professor Legge’s Aboriginal Literature class I participate in a discussion of conflicts between Shamanism and Christianity. A young woman of Inuit descent, brings her mother to the class and they describe their struggle to reconnect with the traditional spirituality of their people.

Guruchathram Ledchumanan, a student from Malaysia, sends me a script, and one cold afternoon we meet at the student centre to discuss the text. As I leave I begin to feel feverish, a bit delirious. My God, have I got the swine flu? I go home and climb into bed. I’m burning up, but suddenly I remember that there is a press conference at the university today. In a fevered haze, I heave myself out of bed. Some strange power compels me to go back to the university.

The press conference is at the old Thompson Student Centre. I walk in and I’m shocked: The original TSC has been perfectly preserved inside the new Inco building! How did I miss that?

I see Brian Peckford, setting up microphones in front of rows of chairs. I’m suspicious. Is this is a space-time hiccup? I see Joey Smallwood and Archbishop Skinner and ... oh my God, three ayatollahs! Then I remember—this is a joint press conference called by Jesus, Mohammed, Vishnu and Buddha. There’s a rumour that they’re going to say something definitive about life after death.

Danny Williams is bringing coffee to the archbishop. A temporary stage has been built with a ‘Pirates of Penzance’ set where the Dalai Lama and several Buddhist monks are chanting the ‘Terra Nova Motors’ jingle as they stand in front of some gaudy 1960s monster cars. Charles de Gaulle sits in the back seat of a pink convertible chatting with Rick Hillier.

A ragtag group of saviours, prophets, gods and goddesses strolls onstage. First there are the high
profile ones: Jesus, Vishnu, Durga and Buddha. Mohammed stays just out of sight, slightly behind the curtain; part of his sleeve is visible. Next come Ganesh (with a bow-tie on his elephant’s trunk—Smallwood is impressed), Mbaba Mwana Waresa the Zulu fertility goddess holding hands with Nanabush (—are they an item?), and two native North American gods, Tshishe Manitu and Igaluk. Thor, Confucius, Laozi and Moses follow a stunning lineup of goddesses including Brunhilda, Brigit, the striking African Igbo, and the Egyptian goddess Rathor.

Hundreds of gods and goddesses shuffle in and take standing positions on tiered rows, as if they’re about to sing in a Shalloway concert. (In fact Susan Knight is there, organizing them.) Jesus goes to the microphone. He’s surprisingly short so Peckford rushes up to lower the mic stand. Jesus says something funny to Danny Williams. I can’t quite make it out. It’s an in-joke. Then Jesus speaks again:

“Ah ... it has come to our attention that people are saying that some humans are more expendable than others ...”

There’s a murmur of contempt in the crowd.

Jesus carries on: “... and people seem to be able to tolerate this because of promises of everlasting life in my arms, or in Abraham’s bosom, or in the embraces of seventy-two virgins. Vishnu would like to address this on behalf of the whole group.”

The tall blue Vishnu holds a prepared text in his upper set of hands as his two lower hands re-adjust the mic. He clears his throat and says “We just wanna say...we never, ever intended that anything we preached should be misconstrued to mean that human beings should meekly accept their lot in life because of promises of a better life in the hereafter; or that they should sacrifice their own lives or send others to their deaths for the sake of a reward in the afterlife ...”

David Cochrane interrupts, shouting, “Can you give us any details about the afterlife?”

Vishnu is obviously trying to stay on message as he says, “We are not permitted, at this point in time, to give any details about, or indeed proofs of, an afterlife, but we will say categorically—there is no throne, no gate made of pearls. The arms of Jesus will not be available for anyone to lie in; there will be no virgins. Let us be perfectly clear on that—again to repeat: anyone using our teachings to justify violence and war should, on a go forward basis, and with our permission, be utterly dismissed ...”

A young, strangely concise, Rex Murphy shouts, “But you yourselves have clearly promised the ‘arms of Jesus’, ‘seventy-two virgins’, etc.”

Jesus looks very uncomfortable. He begins stammering. Mohammed saves him by shouting from behind the curtain “Metaphor. It’s all just a complex metaphor!”

There’s a gasp from the ayatollahs. Rex interrupts again, “So if all that stuff is metaphor and nobody is expendable, are you saying that war is never justifiable under any circumstances?”

The saviours, prophets, gods and goddesses all shout ‘yes’ in a thousand different languages. The room falls silent as they file out for a reception at the Religious Studies Department. High school reporter Toni Marie Wiseman snags an interview with one of the Greek gods but it is quickly shut down. The ayatollahs and the bishops seem lost, disappointed. Strangely, Hillier and De Gaulle, the old soldiers, seem relieved.

As I leave the Inco Building I see Smallwood trying to join the deities line. I hear him arguing with the security guard as I turn back and see the Thompson Student Centre disappear in a shimmering light. I see a Bugden’s, hail it, get in, and notice that the driver is Albert Hatcher. We talk about the old days and we agree that Memorial is at least trying to keep up with the emerging mosaic. We also agree that being a pacifist is a truly ludicrous pursuit—especially if you’re hanging around with the humans. My fever seems to be subsiding; maybe it wasn’t the swine flu after all.

The founding member of The Resource Centre for the Arts at the LSPU Hall in St. John’s, Andy Jones is an actor, writer and storyteller who has written and toured five one-man comedy shows. He has also adapted a number of Newfoundland folktales as both plays and children’s books. His adaptation of The Queen Of Paradise’s Garden was nominated for a 2009 WANL book award in the Children’s/Young Adult’s Category.
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COMFORTABLY RELAXED in his favourite Chinese restaurant in St. John’s, Nathan Penney could easily talk for hours and it would be just as easy to listen. That’s because Mr. Penney has a remarkable story to tell, although, he may not consider it as such. Born in 1920, Mr. Penney describes himself as a traveling salesman and that’s correct—to a point. He is also a former Newfoundland Ranger, an amateur radio operator, dedicated Rotarian and a friend, supporter and graduate of Memorial.

Mr. Penney’s philanthropic involvement with the university started at a difficult time of his life with the illness and eventual passing of his spouse Grace. The mix of witty remarks and tender stories such as the one about the letters they used to write to each other during the war years reveal a deep, tender relationship. “I did not want all the gnashing of teeth and weepiness. I would rather remember her the way she was,” he said about their decision to donate their bodies to the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial. “That’s one time she agreed with me. She said that was a proper thing to do,” he laughs.

Catherine Barrett, development officer for planned giving with the Office of Alumni Affairs and Development, explained that Mr. Penney, in addition to his deeply personal anatomical gift to the medical school, has also created an endowed scholarship in his and his wife’s name. Memorial receives most of its legacy gifts through personal wills, but there are many other ways to give, she said. A legacy gift could include gifts of life insurance as well as gifts of securities. All of those can be set up in various ways that may have different financial benefits for the donor, which is why Ms. Barrett recommends that potential donors carefully discuss their options with a qualified financial adviser before making a gift.

Derrick Hutchens, B.Comm’78, principal with the Noseworthy Chapman Chartered Accountants, agrees. He recently served as an executor for a large estate that, among other charities, benefited Memorial. He stresses the importance of planning when it comes to personal finances. “I think people should start putting together a will very early in life. Not that it’s going to be cast in stone—of course there are going to be changes. The will is something you should sit down and review on an annual basis,” he said.

Mr. Hutchens explained that a will gives a significant amount of control over personal assets assuring that they are distributed according to personal preferences.

“In the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, if there is no will, different rules are involved. Basically, what happens then is half the estate would go to a spouse, if there is a spouse, and the other half would go to the children to be divided equally. If there are no spouse and no children, the estate would go to the next level of family beneficiaries,” he said.

Ms. Barrett encourages those who are considering making a planned gift or who have already made provisions in their wills to support Memorial, to visit the office and discuss, in confidence, the ways in which they can designate their legacy gift to ensure it will be realized the way they intend it to be.

“People are often surprised to learn that for as little as $25,000 you can set up a permanently endowed scholarship fund.”

“Memorial has really benefited from legacy gifts. Many of our scholarships and awards have been funded through estate gifts. Our libraries have received many in-kind bequests such as historical documents and rare books. It is a misconception that you have to be wealthy to leave behind a meaningful legacy. People are often surprised to learn that for as little as $25,000 you can set up a permanently endowed scholarship fund. These scholarships continue forever. It’s a wonderful way to remember somebody special to you.”

Mr. Penney today talks about exceptional respect he and his wife received from everybody at the Faculty of Medicine and the care people like Margaret Miller, development officer for the faculty, have extended throughout his involvement with the university. Mr. Penney made a habit of addressing the first-year medical students and talking about his and his wife’s decision. “I want to make it personal for the students. And sometimes they do have tears in their eyes.”
Governor Sir William Allardyce Opens Memorial University College

With no government funding, the board turned to private sources of funding and secured a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The corporation agreed to contribute $15,000 a year for five years, while the government contributed an additional $5,000. Five faculty members taught everything from German and classics to chemistry and physics. The original staff were: John Lewis Paton (classics and German), Albert G. Hatcher (mathematics), Alfred Hunter (English and French), George O’Sullivan (chemistry and physics), Solomon Whiteway (history) and Elizabeth McGrath (registrar).

“The college has been erected as a Memorial to those who fought and fell in the hope that by their sacrifice their country might be made a better and happier place for their fellow men. Can we doubt that those who strove to establish the college and succeeded in spite of all difficulties were inspired with that spirit of service, and is it possible that the building itself... is not already endowed with the same spirit?”

– St. John’s Evening Telegram, September 16, 1925

1930s: The Value of Individual Experience

The 1930s proved to be difficult years in Newfoundland and Labrador but Memorial continued to grow. In 1935, when Albert Hatcher, took the reins as president from the retiring John Lewis Paton, Memorial University College’s faculty had more than doubled to 12 people. He presided over a student body of 220 young men and women who paid the annual $50 tuition. And the library held more than 8,000 books.

During economically trying times, Hatcher like his predecessor, provided strong and steady leadership. If Paton’s legacy was Memorial’s reputation as a solid educational institution, with its graduates eagerly sought by government departments, then Hatcher’s legacy is the emphasis on the value that Memorial places on individuality. Hatcher was intensely interested in every single student who walked through the doors of the college. Valuing the individuality of each student and the experiences they bring to Memorial remains to this day one of the university’s hallmarks.
1940s: Country to Province, College to University

During the war years the students shared their college with the Canadian forces. Wounded sailors were tended in the gymnasium and the members of the Canadian and Newfoundland forces took courses at the college. After the war as many as 50 former servicemen enrolled at Memorial. Their club met in a basement room on Parade Street building where they held vociferous debates on the future of the province.

In the spring of 1949, that future took a controversial turn as the country became the tenth province in the confederation of Canada. One of the first acts of the new provincial government, under Premier Joseph R. Smallwood, was to raise the status of the college to a university. Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Preserving a distinct Culture and Consciousness

“If there was a time to make the college a university, that time is now, now that we have become a province of Canada... we should do something to see to it that our distinctly Newfoundland culture and consciousness do not disappear and are preserved and maintained down to many generations in the future... At the same time, there is no reason, if we have vision and if we have the courage... the University of Newfoundland for its size should not be the most distinguished university in the whole world...”

– Joseph R. Smallwood on Aug. 11, 1949 during his second reading of the legislation establishing the Memorial University of Newfoundland.

1950s: Crowded Hallways

Two years after Memorial granted its first degrees at convocation in 1950, Raymond Gushue stepped into the position of president with Lord Rothermere as first chancellor. They faced surging admissions and overcrowding in the classrooms as the veterans returned from the war and the population of the new province continued to grow.

1960 – 1961: The times they are a changing

In 1960 Memorial conferred its first honorary degree on its retiring registrar, Monnie Mansfield. The whole school was buzzing with preparations for the move to the comparatively spacious new buildings on Elizabeth Avenue. Moving day, Oct. 9, 1961, was proclaimed a provincial holiday. Dignitaries from the English-speaking world arrived for the ceremony. Eleanor Roosevelt, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker (despite a bitter ongoing dispute with the federal government over subsidies under Term 29 of the Terms of Union), 41 presidents from Canada’s 42 universities, and more than 1,000 guests attended a gala evening banquet.

As part of the pomp and ceremony, Lord Thompson of Fleet became the second chancellor at a special convocation during which the university conferred its first honorary doctoral degrees. A grand chapter in Memorial’s history was closing and a new one had begun.
Joan F. Clark, CM, HN’98, has become a member of the Order of Canada for her contributions as an author of literature for both children and adults, and as an arts activist who, for decades, has supported provincial and national cultural organizations.

Daniel Crews, B.Sc.’05, a native of Grand Bank, carried the Olympic Torch on January 17th during the Medicine Hat-to-Lethbridge stage.

Dr. John FitzGerald, BA’89, B.Ed.’90, MA’92, has concluded his work as the province’s representative in the Newfoundland and Labrador Office of Federal-Provincial Relations in Ottawa and assumed the position of special adviser responsible for research and protocol within the province’s Executive Council.

Janet Gardiner, CM, HN’98, was named to the Order of Canada for her enduring contribution as an executive and volunteer in the business and community sectors of Newfoundland and Labrador for the past 50 years.

J.J. (Jack) Hillyard, B. Comm.’70, retired vice president BMO Bank of Montreal in Newfoundland and Labrador, and current chair of the MUN Faculty of Business Advisory Board, was appointed in November to the Federal Board of Canada Development Investment Corporation.

David Loveys, B.Comm.’78, is the new director, chief financial officer and corporate secretary of Aurion Resources Ltd., Vancouver, BC.

Elizabeth Marshall, B.Sc.’73, has been appointed to the national Senate. She was previously the MHA for Topsail.

John Perlin, HN’08, was honoured with the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador in recognition of his demonstrated excellence and achievements in endeavours that have benefitted the province and its residents.

Alan Perry, HN’97, is now an honorary member of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Jill Thomson, MA’92, completed both a PhD in Economic Geography (on electricity sector re-regulation) at Auckland University and an LLB Hons (1st Class) at Waikato University in New Zealand, both in 2009. She is managing partner in Eclectic Energy a consultancy primarily involved in providing research services.

Michael Ryan, BA’01, originally from Marystown, is an accomplished long distance runner living in New York.

ELAYNE HARRIS BA’70, M.Ed.’79; Ed.D.’92, OISE is an educational consultant in Vancouver specializing in the learning, education and training of adults in organizations, professions and communities. One of her assignments was a CIDA-funded project on gender mainstreaming with three universities in eastern Indonesia from the Ujung Pandang, pop, 2.25 million. There, she discovered that the Victorian term antimacassar came into the English language because macassar is the Indonesian word for the local palm tree extract so utilized in men’s hair oil in those days.

THREE NEW PROVINCIAL JUDGES APPOINTED

Mike Madden, BA’71, was appointed to the provincial court in Gander.

Jacqueline M. Brazil, BA’88, has been appointment to Harbour Grace.

Lois Skanes, BA’81, will be on the bench in St. John’s.
In May 2009, JAMES (JAMIE) PARSONS B.Sc. 1997, B.Ed. 1998, M.Ed. (2005), was elected to the executive of the National Science Fair Committee of Youth Science Canada for a three year term. In May 2010 he assumed the role of chair of that committee for one year. He has also served as Atlantic Zone Representative of that committee from 2006-2009 and was chair of the Eastern Newfoundland Regional Science Fair from 2005-2006.

CORRECTION
There was an error on page 27 of the winter edition of Luminus (2010, Vol. 34 No. 1). The photo in the upper right hand corner showing the painting presented to General and Mrs. Hillier is by George P. Horan, QC, BA’70, not by Jean Claude Roy to whom it is mistakenly attributed.

Dr. James Wright, Jan. 11, 2010
Gladys Deutsch, BAH ’75, Jan. 13, 2010
Rennie Gaulton, BAE ’69, BA’69, Nov. 9, 2009
Dr. Sister Kathrine Bellamy, RSM, ONL, CM, D.Lit. ’06, March 23, 2010
Rupert Carol Shaw, BA’62, B.Ed.’67, March 25, 2009
Helen Jones (nee Ball), MA’71, Feb. 18, 2010

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The First World War caused the loss of Newfoundland’s young generation of lads, several from same families. The loss took several decades to recover. The highest education of that time was senior matriculation, which was equal to first year university elsewhere. To go to an English university one needed “London Matriculation” which was a little more advanced than our junior matriculation, level before senior.

It was decided a college giving two years of university courses would be the best memorial to our loss. Dr. Arthur Barnes, member of Home Affairs, was interested and helpful as were the members of each religion and Dr. Vincent Burke who I remember as he was around in my time and took great interest in the college. A grant from some USA foundation of, I think, $15,000 for several years was promised. Mr. J.L. Paton, retired Head Master of Manchester Grammar School, was travelling in Canada, was interviewed and accepted to be the President.

The College was officially opened on Sept. 15, 1925 at 3:00 p.m. The Lieutenant-Governor acted as chairman. There was a large attendance and several speeches.

Mr. Paton taught Latin and helped others. Dr. Hatcher was a math teacher and helped with physics; Dr. Hunter taught English and French and O’Sullivan the sciences. The fee was $40.00 for the year and $5.00 to cover breakage. We had Monday morning assembly for any discussion. Mr. Paton suggested saying the Lord’s Prayer would be suitable start, but outside powers disapproved so he suggested a minute of silent prayer. Dr. Hatcher suggested the motto of Provehito in Altum from advice given to St. Peter which fitted with the fisherman in Newfoundland. College colours were decided of scarlet and white and captains of various sports were elected.

I felt the first year was difficult for some students, especially those with little or no science as some science equipment did not arrive until March of the following year, and the science professor, O’Sullivan, became ill in November and later returned to England and his place was taken by Mr. Nickerson from Halifax.

Mr. Paton was keen for us all to have a good education. Frequently, on Wednesday mornings at 9:00, singers or musicians gave a 15-minute session. 4:30 on Thursdays Mr. Bevan organist of the cathedral came to have us all singing. A bit of fun for many, frequent debates between ourselves and against outside groups or clubs. Lectures from outside speakers. The first I remember were Sir Wilfred Grenfell, a brother of Sir Robert Bond, and an editor of some USA magazine. Others were on the Labrador boundary. We were taken and shown how the new dock was being built. Another time, we were taken over to Bowring Premises where the Eagle was unloading seal pelts and Mr. Eric Bowring showed us how it was handled. Many of the girls had kerchiefs to their nose.

At that time the London Players were putting on plays at the Crescent Theatre. Mr. Compton, the leader, came to the College and gave a rendition of parts of Shakespeare. Mr. Paton got tickets for the students to occupy the front three rows to hear one of the plays and Mr. Compton offered a prize for the best essay on the play.

Both Mr. Paton and Mr. Hatcher invited three or four students for meals at their home. Students helped to prepare grounds for sports and also helped Mr. Paton and Mr. Nickerson to clear the snow outside. Mr. Paton also had a group of nine to help them with Latin and occasionally gave tickets to one for some important play or movie.

This is a brief summary of events during the first year of the College.

Dr. Nigel Rusted is a distinguished graduate of Memorial University College’s very first class.
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