

## EDITORIAL

IN AN ESSAY PUBLISHED IN *SLATE* IN 2007, in which she reflects on the writing of her bestselling memoir *The Liars' Club* (1995), Mary Karr famously said that “memoir is not an act of history but an act of memory, which is innately corrupt.” She later expanded on this idea in her book *The Art of Memoir* (2015), in which she noted that modern readers have lost their “confidence in objective truth,” as “formerly sacred sources of truth like history and statistics have lost ground,” yet memoirs are paradoxically seen as more reliable because they “openly confess the nature of their corruption.” While her first statement suggests that histories and memoirs are fundamentally opposed, as the former is based on reality while the latter is “corrupted” by memory, her second statement seems to qualify this assertion by suggesting that they are not really that different after all, as they both involve an active engagement with the past, which always involves a conscious negotiation between fact and fiction. Our spring issue features a special section of works that engage in this negotiation by selecting, framing, and manipulating elements drawn from the past. While these works may seem quite different at first glance, as the histories are based on a wide range of archival sources and the memoirs are based solely on personal recollections, they all seek to translate the contingencies of reality into compelling narratives that are consciously designed to produce aesthetic effects.

This section begins with Eric Miller’s story “A Dialogue Concerning Chickens,” which takes place in colonial Canada in 1793 and features a fictional conversation between various historical figures. This is followed by Jason Brown’s story “From the Journal of Robert Wills,” which describes the life of a merchant sailing family in the early 1800s, as recorded in a fictional logbook. John Barton’s poem “The Douglas Treaties” reflects on the infamous series of land purchases made by James Douglas, Governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island, in the 1850s, and Rebecca Păpucaru’s story “Booming” describes a possible encounter between Pauline Johnson—the indigenous Canadian poet and performer, who was more popularly known

by her Mohawk stage name Tekahionwake—and Sarah Bernhardt—the legendary French actress, who gave a series of performances in Quebec in the winter of 1905. This is followed by a series of works on maritime disasters, including Stephen Henighan’s story “One Night in Her Life,” which recounts the experiences of a Titanic survivor in 1912; Ron Ennis’ story “On the Ice,” which focuses on the 1914 Newfoundland Sealing Disaster, when over a hundred sealers were stranded on an ice floe; and Marion Starling Boyer’s poem “The Men Asleep at the Bottom of the World,” which describes the experiences of the Ross Sea Party, who were part of Ernest Shackleton’s Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition and who were stranded when their ship became frozen in an ice floe that broke off from the main shelf in 1916. This is followed by Tanya Bellehumeur-Allatt’s story “Doc Millington,” which is set in Beirut in 1983, shortly after a multinational force was sent to oversee the Palestinian withdrawal from Lebanon. David Yerex Williamson’s poem “Through Disassembled Houses of Perfect Stones” signals a shift from history to memoir, as it reflects on the relationship between memory and the past. The speaker notes, for example, that “the weight of history lies / on the spine of memory,” but over time the “years eat the memory out of history,” and the past becomes “more suited to memoir.” This is followed by a series of works that illustrate the process of translating the past through memory, as seen in Wayne Curtis’ essay “War Bride,” Gerald Arthur Moore’s poem “Paradise Lost,” J. Alan Nelson’s essay “Lila Leichenberg Hides a Card,” and John Wall Barger’s poem “Dreaming of a Small Call for Help,” which all feature personal reminiscences from childhood or adolescence. This section then concludes with two memoirs that focus on how the past continues to impact the lives of the writers in the present: Jaclyn Kar Yin McLachlan’s essay “The Nutbar Book,” which tells the story of a childhood friend who suffers from a mental illness that has deeply affected their relationship over the years, and Tara Mills’ essay “Golden Jack,” which similarly focuses on a child with special needs and the impact this has had on the lives of his parents.

Our spring issue also includes two new chronicles: Jerry White’s review of Robert Eggers’ new film *The Northman* (2022) and Chris Elson’s review of the Marcin Wasilewski Trio’s new album *En attendant* (Waiting, 2021) and Edgar Wright’s music documentary *The Sparks Brothers* (2021).