

## EDITORIAL

IN HIS FOREWORD TO A VOLUME on French science-fiction writer Jules Verne, Ray Bradbury notes that Verne “could not resist going on a journey,” as he always longed “to be at odds, not to know where he came from, where arrived or where going.” For Verne, in other words, the experience of travel was valued precisely because it produced a sense of disruption, disorientation, and detachment, which Bradbury describes as “the aesthetic of lostness.” While writers more often emphasize the educational benefits of travel, as the process of learning about other people and other cultures is said to provide insight into oneself and one’s own culture, it can also be motivated by a desire to escape and to lose oneself. And even when this desire is not the motivating impulse, the experience of travel can still disrupt one’s sense of identity, which becomes particularly evident when long-term travellers return to find that they have become foreigners in their own land. Instead of providing a deeper sense of connection and self-understanding, travel thus also has the potential to sever our connection to the world and transform us into perpetual wanderers.

One of the reasons why the experience of travel is informed by such conflicting impulses is that it can take many different forms. While some see travel as an act of recreation and relaxation—a luxury reserved for the wealthy few—others see it as an act of desperation—a risky and often dangerous endeavour that should only be attempted when one’s survival is at stake and one has no other choice. While both of these forms have roots in antiquity, the former is most often associated with the emergence of modern tourism in the nineteenth century, which was made possible by the rise of an affluent middle class, and the latter is most often associated with the massive population shifts of the mid-twentieth century, when large numbers of people were displaced by war, famine, and poverty as well as social, political, and religious persecution. Both of these forms remain relevant today, as we are currently witnessing unprecedented levels of tourism as well as unprecedented numbers of immigrants and refugees. The ubiquity of travel

has thus transformed not only our sense of space by making the globe seem smaller and more easily accessible than ever before but also our perception of the world by reducing it to an assortment of desirable and undesirable destinations. These transformations have obviously had a tremendous impact on many local economies, which is sometimes negative and sometimes positive. It has also contributed to a growing imbalance in social power, as economic dependence often feeds resentment towards tourists and economic competition often feeds resentment towards migrant workers.

As many of our readers are currently in the process of planning summer vacations or moving to new places, our spring issue features a special section that focuses on the experience of travel from various perspectives. Sarah Christina Brown's "Dinner with the Lynx" imagines a diplomatic visit made by Queen Elizabeth II to the Canadian north, and it provides both a humorous depiction of how Canada is perceived by foreigners as well as a serious reflection on the economic consequences of exploiting these perceptions for the sake of publicity and profit. Tom Whalen's "Reports from Stuttgart-West" describe the experiences of a foreigner living in Germany, and it vividly captures the sense of pleasure that comes from riding trams and sitting in cafés as well as the sense of alienation that comes from being alone in a foreign land where one has not yet mastered the language. David Huebert's "Invierno" tells the story of a Canadian who travels the world in an effort to ski every day for an entire year, and it explores the psychological motivation behind obsessive travelling and restlessness as well as the very real dangers that such travelling often entails. While the protagonist treats the world as his personal playground, he is eventually forced to confront the reality that he is merely a temporary visitor to a place where he does not truly belong. Howard Wright's "Points of Departure" similarly describes a trip that culminates in disaster, as the act of travelling creates a sense of detachment that ultimately influences how the characters feel about each other. In the end, their relationship becomes yet another journey into the unknown, from which they cannot return unscathed. Shao-Pin Luo's "Partition" extends this sense of detachment to the experience of the Chinese diaspora, as it tells the story of a Canadian immigrant whose family is divided between China and Taiwan—a country where her Chinese relatives are forbidden to travel. While the protagonist attempts to mediate between these groups both temporally and spatially by chronicling her family's past and conveying this history to her Taiwanese relatives, she also reflects more gen-

erally on the profound sense of loss produced by geopolitical borders and conflicts. The final story in this section, M. Menachem Kaiser's "Baby Zango Walks," similarly focuses on the experience of diaspora through the story of a second-generation Jewish-Canadian immigrant who attempts to connect with his relatives in Hungary as well as his people in Israel, but who gradually becomes a permanent traveller without any home at all. The protagonist eventually ends up in the Sinai desert, which is appealing precisely because it resembles "nowhere," and it is here that he encounters other travellers who share similar experiences of alienation and isolation. This story perhaps most vividly illustrates "the aesthetic of lostness" by describing travellers who completely lose track of where they come from, where they are, and where they are going and who ultimately find themselves in an empty space that defies assimilation, from which they may never return.

In addition to this special travel section, our spring issue also features an interview with the celebrated short story writer Susan Steinberg as well as new work by Steve Tomasula, one of the leading experimental writers in the U.S. It also introduces our new "Chronicles" section, which features reviews of recent cultural events across Canada.