

EDITORIAL

IN THE OPENING POEM FROM HIS BOOK *POETIC MEDITATIONS* (1820), French writer Alphonse de Lamartine famously describes the experience of sitting alone on a mountain watching the sun set over a landscape of rivers, lakes, and forests. This tranquil scene evokes a sense of melancholy for the speaker, as someone appears to be missing and without this person the entire world seems depopulated and desolate:

Que me font ces vallons, ces palais, ces chaumières?
Vains objets dont pour moi le charme est envolé;
Fleuves, rochers, forêts, solitudes si chères,
Un seul être vous manque, et tout est dépeuplé.

The speaker's contemplation of nature thus leads into a somber meditation on the transience of life and the permanence of death, which is experienced as a profound lack or absence that can never be filled.

Our autumn issue features a selection of works that explore these themes in various ways. Some of the pieces feature characters who suddenly vanish and whose absence leaves a void in the lives of those left behind. Kenneth Vanderbeek's story "Duplicity," for example, focuses on a romantic encounter between a man and a woman that takes a strange detour when the woman mysteriously disappears and then reappears in a seemingly altered form. Anderson Borges Costa's story "Shout, the Poet" describes a prehistoric man who similarly becomes infatuated with a woman who mysteriously disappears and whose presence only remains in the form of artworks left behind. Theresa Moritz's story "Casts and Likenesses" also reflects on the relationship between art and loss by describing how the sudden disappearance of several children at a summer cottage becomes a source of creative inspiration. Marshall Gu's "The Monster of Winowa Lake" also focuses on the mysterious disappearance of a young woman and its effects on the residents of a small town, and August C. Bourré's "Tobacco Hand" focuses

on a man whose wife has left him and whose life seems empty without her.

Other pieces focus more specifically on the experience of death and mourning. For example, Obi Nwakanma has contributed elegies for the Irish poet Seamus Heaney and the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, who both passed away in 2013. Pritmon Pirann's "One More Find by the River" also describes the tragic death of a young indigenous woman, thus drawing attention to a current national crisis. Taryn Pearcey's "Your Mother's Daughter" also describes a woman whose life gradually unravels as she is repeatedly visited by the ghost of her dead mother, thus illustrating how the experience of mourning can sometimes blur into insanity.

Other pieces focus on population migrations, which similarly disrupt the lives of families and communities. For example, Carla K. Stewart's story "Our Bodies at Home" describes a Maritime family that includes one daughter who leaves home and another who stays behind and whose sense of loss makes her profoundly isolated. Dan Pope's story "A Shipbuilder's Son" similarly features a young man from the Maritimes who travels to Montreal for school and ends up permanently disconnected from his home. Karen Foster's essay "The Right to Be Rural" also discusses the impact of population migrations from a sociological perspective, and it presents a powerful argument concerning the mistreatment of rural communities and the need for Canadians to reconsider the rights associated with citizenship.

Our autumn issue also features an interview with poets Rachel Lebowitz and Zachariah Wells, who reflect on what it means to be a Maritime writer and how the experience of moving across the country for education and employment has influenced their work and their sense of connectedness to local communities. Robert Thacker's essay "Alice Munro Country" also provides a fascinating reconsideration of the significance of place in the works of Alice Munro and in particular her first book, *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), which is currently celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. The issue finally concludes with two new chronicles: Roberta Barker's review of the Toneelgroep's performance of William Shakespeare's "Wars of the Roses" plays, *Kings of War*, and Christopher Elson's review of several recent piano trio albums.