

# LRC

LITERARY REVIEW OF CANADA

\$6.50  
Vol. 22, No. 8  
October 2014

JULIE SEDIVY

## What turns us on

*"These scientists studied human fascination—and you won't believe what they found out!"*



---

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

JESSA GAMBLE  
The fracking fracas

MICHAEL VALPY  
Toronto:  
biography of a mean city

ANDREA LAWLOR  
The night we almost lost  
a country

---

### PLUS:

**NON-FICTION** Stephen Bown on the surprising scientific interests of the HBC + Adam Chapnick on Jack Granatstein's re-evaluation of Vimy + Susan Knutson on Canada's use of Shakespeare + Michael Morden on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission + Jill Frayne on canoeing in the north + Peter Macleod and Frances Woolley on unions, workers and democracy

**FICTION** Ava Homa reviews *The Ever After of Ashwin Rao* by Padma Viswanathan + Mark Frutkin reviews *Us Conductors* by Sean Michaels

**POETRY** Jeff Latosik + M. Travis Lane + Ben Ladouceur + Robyn Sarah



Publications Mail Agreement #40032362  
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to  
LRC, Circulation Dept.  
PO Box 8, Station K  
Toronto, ON M4P 2G1

EDITOR

**Bronwyn Drainie**  
[editor@reviewcanada.ca](mailto:editor@reviewcanada.ca)

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

**Mark Lovewell, Molly Peacock, Robin Roger, Anthony Westell**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**Judy Stoffman**

POETRY EDITOR

**Moir MacDougall**

COPY EDITOR

**Madeline Koch**

ONLINE EDITORS

**Diana Kuprel, Jack Mitchell, Donald Rickerd, C.M.**

PROOFREADERS

**Mike Lipsius, Heather Schultz, Robert Simone, Rob Tilley, Jeannie Weese**

RESEARCH

**Rob Tilley**

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

**Clare Gibbons**

DESIGN

**James Harbeck**

ADVERTISING/SALES

**Michael Wile**  
[ads@reviewcanada.ca](mailto:ads@reviewcanada.ca)

DIRECTOR, SPECIAL PROJECTS

**Michael Booth**

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT

**Michael Stevens**

PUBLISHERS

**Alastair Cheng**  
[a.cheng@reviewcanada.ca](mailto:a.cheng@reviewcanada.ca)  
**Helen Walsh**  
[h.walsh@reviewcanada.ca](mailto:h.walsh@reviewcanada.ca)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**John Honderich, C.M., J. Alexander Houston, Frances Lankin, Jack Mintz, Trina McQueen**

ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Michael Adams, Ronald G. Atkey, P.C., Q.C., Alan Broadbent, C.M., Chris Ellis, Drew Fagan, James Gillies, C.M., Carol Hansell, Donald Macdonald, P.C., C.C., Susan Reisler, Grant Reuber, O.C., Don Rickerd, C.M., Rana Sarkar, Mark Sarner, Bernard Schiff, Reed Scowen**

POETRY SUBMISSIONS

For poetry submission guidelines, please see [reviewcanada.ca](http://reviewcanada.ca).

LRC design concept by Jackie Young/INK

FOUNDED IN 1991 BY P.A. DUTIL

The LRC is published 10 times a year by the Literary Review of Canada Charitable Organization.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

**Individuals in Canada \$56/year plus GST/HST. (Libraries and institutions in Canada \$68/year plus GST/HST.) Outside Canada, please pay \$86/year for individuals, or \$98 for libraries and institutions.**

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CIRCULATION

**Literary Review of Canada**  
 P.O. Box 8, Station K, Toronto ON M4P 2G1  
[literaryreview@cxcontact.com](mailto:literaryreview@cxcontact.com)  
 tel: 416-932-5081 • [reviewcanada.ca](http://reviewcanada.ca)

©2014 The Literary Review of Canada. All rights, including translation into other languages, are reserved by the publisher in Canada, the United States, Great Britain and all other countries participating in the Universal Copyright Convention, the International Copyright Convention and the Pan-American Copyright Convention. Nothing in this publication may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher.

ISSN 1188-7494

The Literary Review of Canada is indexed in the Canadian Literary Periodicals Index and the Canadian Index and is distributed by Disticor and Magazines Canada.

**3 Weathering the Storm**

An essay  
 ROBERT SIRMAN

**6 The (Other) October Crisis**

A review of *The Night Canada Stood Still: How the 1995 Quebec Referendum Nearly Cost Us Our Country*, by Robert Wright  
 ANDREA LAWLOR

**8 The Limits of the TRC**

A review of *Truth and Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools*, by Ronald Niezen  
 MICHAEL MORDEN

**10 What Turns Us On**

A review of *Riveted: The Science of Why Jokes Make Us Laugh, Movies Make Us Cry and Religion Makes Us Feel One with the Universe*, by Jim Davies  
 JULIE SEDIVY

**13 Self-Discovery in a Canoe**

A review of *Paddlenorth: Adventure, Resilience and Renewal in the Arctic Wild*, by Jennifer Kingsley  
 JILL FRAYNE

**14 Climbing Down from Vimy Ridge**

A review of *The Greatest Victory: Canada's One Hundred Days, 1918*, by J.L. Granatstein  
 ADAM CHAPNICK

**16 Old Ideas of Air Travel**

A poem  
 JEFF LATOSIK

**16 The Beach at La Villette**

A poem  
 M. TRAVIS LANE

**17 Beautiful Inmate**

A poem  
 BEN LADOUCEUR

**17 Segovia**

A poem  
 ROBYN SARAH

**18 When Multiculturalism Fell into the Sea**

A review of *The Ever After of Ashwin Rao*, by Padma Viswanathan  
 AVA HOMA

**19 Of Music and Espionage**

A review of *Us Conductors*, by Sean Michaels  
 MARK FRUTKIN

**20 The Perennial Temptation**

A review of *On Fracking*, by C. Alexia Lane, and *Groundswell: The Case for Fracking*, by Ezra Levant  
 JESSA GAMBLE

**22 Reinventing the Bard**

A review of *The Tempest* and *Romeo and Juliet*, by William Shakespeare, and *Shakespeare in Québec: Nation, Gender and Adaptation*, by Jennifer Drouin  
 SUSAN KNUTSON

**24 Pretty Mean City**

A review of *Toronto: Biography of a City*, by Allan Levine  
 MICHAEL VALPY

**26 A Larger Role for Unions**

A review of *Unions Matter: Advancing Democracy, Economic Equality and Social Justice*, edited by Matthew Behrens  
 FRANCES WOOLLEY

**27 The Boss-Employee Two-Step**

A review of *After Occupy: Economic Democracy for the 21st Century*, by Tom Malleson  
 PETER MACLEOD

**29 The Clever Science of Commerce**

A review of *Enlightened Zeal: The Hudson's Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870*, by Ted Binnema  
 STEPHEN R. BOWN

**31 Letters and Responses**

KATHERINE FIERLBECK, JANET E. SMITH, JOEL AND IAN GOLD, NICK MOUNT, ANTANAS SILEIKA, IAIN GOW

In Memoriam

**Shira Herzog, 1953-2014**

The LRC is saddened by the recent loss of one of its contributors, who will be missed.

Cover art and pictures throughout the issue by **Oleg Portnoy**.

Oleg Portnoy is an award-winning illustrator and graphic designer from Toronto. His illustrations have received recognition from American Illustration, Society of Illustrators West, 3X3 Illustration, *CMYK Magazine* and *Creative Quarterly*.

From time to time, the LRC may allow carefully selected organizations to send mail to subscribers, offering products or services that may be of interest. If you do not wish to receive such correspondence, please contact our Subscriber Service department at [literaryreview@cxcontact.com](mailto:literaryreview@cxcontact.com), or call 416-932-5081, or mail P.O. Box 8, Station K, Toronto ON M4P 2G1.

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

We acknowledge the assistance of the OMDC Magazine Fund, an initiative of Ontario Media Development Corporation.



# Self-Discovery in a Canoe

*A 54-day Arctic journey teaches deep lessons.*

JILL FRAYNE

---

## **Paddlenorth: Adventure, Resilience and Renewal in the Arctic Wild**

*Jennifer Kingsley*

Greystone Books

240 pages, hardcover

ISBN 9781771640350

**I**N A REVIEW OF AN ACCOUNT OF THE POLAR explorer Ernest Shackleton's harrowing adventure in the Antarctic, Anthony Lane of the *New Yorker* attributed Shackleton's lifelong passion for the vast white wastes of the South Pole to the explorer's discovery of "the deep contentments of desolation."

Jennifer Kingsley is a kindred spirit of Shackleton's.

Kingsley is a naturalist and guide in Canada's most remote North. She is also a writer and she has a story: a 54-day canoe journey she made in 2005 with five companions down the Back River to the Arctic Ocean.

Kingsley and her long-time paddling partner Tim Irvin trawled their community for four others, acquiring a third canoeing veteran they both knew well and three others, two women and a man, less experienced in white water and less known to them.

Prior to setting out, the six of them dealt creatively with these disparities by agreeing to shift tent partners and paddling pairs throughout the trip. They also rotated leadership, with the leader-of-the-day empowered to make final decisions. Other agreements were made at the outset: no food drops, no phone contacts, no reliance on outside aid except in dire emergency. They would travel through Nunavut tundra and reach their endpoint in the Arctic Ocean under their own power.

Journeys are a rich mine to plumb, having, as every good narrative does, a beginning, a middle and an end. Kingsley's words, rising from her diary, read as freshly as when she laid the scaffold for her book nine years ago.

Her writing mirrors the trip's arc, starting hesitantly as she and her companions find their fit with the still-winter conditions on the river and with each other. "I longed to be my best self and was afraid that person wouldn't show up," she writes. Her boat capsizes on virtually the first day, and then never again. By mid trip, she is fully engaged, the writing at its strongest and most

---

*Jill Frayne has written for explore magazine, Up Here and The Walrus. Her travel memoir, Starting Out in the Afternoon: A Mid-Life Journey into Wild Land (Random House, 2003), was nominated for a Governor General's Award.*

confident as she steers through one furious set of rapids after another, the land sprawling around them unbroken by a single tree. When the group reaches the brackish water of the Arctic Ocean delta, the rhythm of the trip judders, tensions surface that were of no account when the trip was in full flow. The group is wind-bound, the world they left behind pressing in, fraying their connection with the land and with each other.

Kingsley's style is concise and spare, nicely evoking what she loves best:

The diagonal push that came from left to right tried to slam us back to shore. The wind

In the unused places of the Earth, nature calls the shots. She unravels humans, wakes us up, rocks us, thumps us in the solar plexus, not to mention kills us.

would assist, but I pried us out, mid-tongue, until we moved beyond the black-on-black shadow that waited to toss us over. It passed a hand's breadth from my hip, and we were home free, for one ... two ... until I angled toward the boiling eddy line. Chaos.

... Jen reached across the boiling confusion and planted her paddle like a tree in firm soil. She leaned far over, beyond logic, and the whole vessel pivoted around her until we bumped up gently to the head of the eddy.

Hallelujah, finding a travel writer who describes meals. Did ever a group eat so handsomely? Kingsley is six feet tall, 140 pounds. With a metabolism like a furnace she insisted they eat well. "My plastic bowl arrived, heaping with quinoa, onions, pine nuts, and crispy trout. The batter crunched between my teeth ... the fish steamed; onions sizzled."

The river they travel is named for George Back, from whose journal Kingsley, noting his light touch, frequently quotes. A surprising number of explorers and expeditioners, slogging through appalling conditions, were highly literary. (Shackleton wrote verse.) It is an interesting coincidence, these three traits: love of adventure, high arousal and a gift for turning a phrase.

What has changed in adventure literature is the focus. Roughly put, nature used to have the starring role, now the observer has. Travel writing these days reflects the trend everywhere, the great swelling in the use of the first person. Now we expect to know who this person forced to eat their moccasins is. Writers pay attention to the

effects of landscape as much as to landscape itself.

A hundred, even 50, years ago, self-exposure was unseemly. John Hunt's account of the first recorded summit of Mount Everest in 1953 breathes not a whisper of what it cost him to send Edmund Hillary that final distance rather than go himself. Swoops of emotion, the tug of group dynamics were detailed only glancingly, if at all. (That is not to say their effects were not addressed. On his final desperate push to South Georgia to find rescue for his stranded crew, Ernest Shackleton took with him a formidable seaman who was also a lout and a bully, rather than have him trouble those left behind.)

In the unused places of the Earth, nature calls the shots. She unravels humans, wakes us up, rocks us, thumps us in the solar plexus, not to mention kills us. To spend days and days in wild land is to ride a huge animal. The currents set running in a group utterly organize how a trip unfolds. But until lately, we did not hear about it.

Kingsley is a keen observer of both landscapes, interior and exterior. The conflict that arises on the Back River for her group is a worthy one, a split between devotees of "be here now" and those who favour getting the trip done. Moving on caribou time, hanging out on the land is balm for three of the group. The other three weight their lives more in the future when the trip will be over: they want to move along. This divide is temperamental. Stamped on the bone is whether we draw our vitality more from congress with nature or with people.

Another source of tension, noted but not laboured, is Tim's state of mourning throughout the trip. His mother had died only two months earlier and the effect of his grief on a small, isolated group must have been daunting. For Kingsley, closer to him than anyone and protective of him, his loss was hers as well. Tim's grief deprived her of his availability and marooned her in the group.

The book is an emotional read, a sense of longing or yearning running throughout. Kingsley is a fine and vulnerable writer. She is a very tall woman in a culture that shames tall women. Being in wild land put her in line with herself in a way she prized. She writes that she came north to feel "both small and strong" and the cold sweeping plains of Nunavut do that for her.

She is the same breed as the American paddler and writer Audrey Sutherland. Deep into old age, Sutherland still spent every summer in Alaska's Panhandle tooling around in a six-foot inflatable kayak, bottles of wine stowed fore and aft, preparing herself delicious mussel curries in the evenings. Her credo was: Go simple. Go solo. Go now.

That's Kingsley in 30 years.

